

## DUNHUANG ART



## THROUGH THE EYES OF DUAN WENJIE

Translated from Chinese

Edited with an introduction by Tan Chung



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Dunhuang although internationally known is infrequently visited. The Mogao shrine at Dunhuang is a cluster of 492 caves, containing 45,000 square metres of frescoes and 2,415 stucco statues. This is a precious art heritage of the world. It has great historical and artistic value. These caves were created, renovated and maintained continually with devotion and care from the 4th upto the 14th century. They were also maintained during the subsequent periods up till the 19th century. From the 7th to 9th century, culture and art enjoyed a golden period in China, so did Dunhuang Art.

In this volume we have provided an English translation of selected writings of Prof. Duan Wenjie, Director of the Dunhuang Academy who has given a chronological study of the contents inside the Mogao caves with several decades of research of the Dunhuang Academy under his command.

Prof. Tan Chung, the editor, has furnished an illuminating introduction, while Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, the driving spirit behind this volume, has made succinct comments in her 'Foreword'. A valuable

<b>Appendix 1</b>	information on all the Mogao caves has been added.
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TAN CHUNG is Professor Consultant at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. He retired from JNU as Professor of Chinese. He has authored important books on China, e.g., China and the Brave New World and Triton and Dragon. Through his writings and his associations, with academic institutions Prof. Tan Chung has provided a fresh outlook for viewing China's past, different from some western critical commentaries.

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## Foreword

Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang --- the very name conjures up a vision of caves lying in the proximity of sand-dunes across the Gobi desert almost touching Turfan and Turkistan. Ever since the discovery of these caves, they have attracted scholars from far and wide. For me too, this was a dream. For years I had perused the reproductions of Dunhuang in many books, looked at the materials brought by Sir Aurel Stein, now in the National Museum, and hoped that one day it would be possible to see the originals in their natural setting. Such an opportunity arose when I was invited to attend an International Symposium on Dunhuang organised by the Dunhuang Academy in 1990. I took this journey by plane and not on foot or on camel back, not through the arduous paths of travellers, pilgrims and traders who had crossed the mountain passes and deserts, and yet the dramatic change in the landscape was evident. Flying over the Gobi desert and the dark-green rocky jade cliffs, gradually we were amongst sand-dunes conglomerates. A vast panorama of caves by the thousands opened up until I found myself suddenly in front of the Dunhuang Caves --- the caves which had called many monks and laymen for centuries. As I entered this dream-world of half-luminosity, I remembered a poem written by a contemporary Buddhist scholar, Zhao Puchu, namely:

"Angels hovering the sky with joy,  
Enlightened path lies for men's choice,  
Hands with umbrellas and garlands,  
Tender is the preacher's exalted glance.  
They fly non-stop through eternity,  
With delight, devotion and dignity,  
I am happy to come for pilgrimage,  
To this jewel of cultural heritage."

Dunhuang epitomizes the mutual dialogue between India and China over the centuries. The creative energies of each, in symbiosis but distinct, are in evidence here in a manner which speaks of a continuous and sustained dialogue at multiple levels of communications between two great cultures. The opening and extension of the Silk Route served as a bridge for direct contact between the two countries by way of trade and commerce. But there was also a constant stream of religious, cultural and deeper spiritual communication. Buddha and his teachings were the inspiration for the goals of this journey.

Monks from India had travelled to China while many from China also travelled to India to collect Buddhist scriptures. This interchange flowered in many ways in philosophy, literature and poetry. It also manifested itself in line and colour, mass and volume in terracotta and stucco statues, frescoes and murals in this breath-taking impressive group of 492 caves covering 45,000 square metres of mural paintings, 2,415 stucco images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Historically the span of creative activity is equally impressive, extending from the fourth to the fourteenth century.

What a treasure and what a privilege to be able to view these caves which had been closed to the public for many decades! As I walked through these caves and looked at the wall paintings, stucco figures and the terracottas, I realised that some of the materials in these caves, particularly manuscripts, silk banners

and other antiquities were today distributed in many repositories of the world including Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia and India. For the art historians and scholars of Buddhist studies, this material, both in situ and that which lies fragmented in many parts of the world, is an invaluable world heritage comparable to the artistic creativity evidenced in Ajanta in India.

Since the establishment of the Dunhuang Academy in 1944, two scholar-painters along with many associates have been copying these paintings for many decades. Professor Chang Shuhong and Professor Duan Wenjie have lived in these caves as custodians, art-historians and painters. Their identification with these caves and their contents is so complete that one cannot think of dissociating the Dunhuang caves from Professor Duan Wenjie and his distinguished predecessor Professor Chang Shuhong.

Although there has been much critical literature on Dunhuang in English and other European languages there was the need to have the authentic voice of a Chinese with a distinct Chinese viewpoint in the interpretation of Dunhuang. I was aware that Prof. Duan Wenjie had written a book on Dunhuang which he had graciously presented to me. I took courage to request Professor Duan to permit IGNC A to translate his work into English for publication. My colleague, Professor Tan Chung, undertook this difficult task and the volume is before us.

We have brought out this volume as a partial fulfilment of the cherished goals of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts to encompass achievements of art and culture of humankind. The volume is divided into three parts. First, the "Introduction" by Professor Tan Chung provides an overview of the history of Dunhuang, of Dunhuang becoming the celebrated repository of wall-paintings and stucco statues, of the Dunhuang Institute and of Professor Duan's contribution to Dunhuang art. The second part which is also the main part of the volume contains the English translation of selected articles of Professor Duan, mostly from his volume in Chinese. As his essays were written at different times, repetition of contents is unavoidable. We have done a selection not only to keep the repetition to the minimum but also to ensure that the volume speaks to a larger readership. The third part is a brief description of each of the 492 caves of the Mogao Grottoes which is largely an abridged translation of the Chinese materials supplied by the Dunhuang Academy which, I am told, is the labour of love of Professor Shi Weixiang who, like Professor Duan, I had the pleasure to meet both at Dunhuang and again in New Delhi in 1991, when they came as the honoured guests of IGNC A.

Through this book, perhaps we are attempting to communicate the vision and the distinctive approach of Professor Duan to this great monument of world cultural heritage. I have no doubt that this volume will make a distinct contribution to the critical literature on Dunhuang and it is hoped that the Dunhuang Academy will sponsor and promote further such studies.

I am glad that this volume is being released to coincide with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Dunhuang Academy in August 1994. I offer this volume as a token of our felicitations and greetings to our sister institute. Although the Dunhuang Academy is fifty years old, it is full of youth and maturity. I have no doubts that it will grow and provide more avenues of exploration of the heritage.

**Kapila Vatsyayan**

New Delhi

June, 1994

## Acknowledgements

This Book comprising the essays of Professor Duan Wenjie on Dunhuang art cherishes a strong desire to popularize information about the unique art treasure of Dunhuang among the English language readers both in India and abroad. This desire was first conceived by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan during her visit to Dunhuang in 1990. There is the Chinese saying that while drinking water from the well we should not forget those who have dug it. That is how this volume owes to Dr. Vatsyayan who has guided the process of production of this volume and rendered enormous help to its fruition.

This volume is the maiden work of the Cell of Sino-Indian Studies (now renamed as East Asian Studies Programme) of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). It is the result of collective labour. Initially, I had the help of three young scholars: Miss Sonu Agnihotri, Mrs. Bagyalakshmi and Dr. (Miss) Rimli Bhattacharya. Sonu and Bagyalakshmi had spent the best part of a year familiarizing themselves with the subject and with the technical terminology of art and religion involved in translating Professor Duan Wenjie's articles into English. While it was an uphill task for them, they also learnt very fast. I appreciate their contributions, particularly their tolerance for my constant interventions. Translation is no easy task and translation involving classical Chinese is doubly difficult. Hence the teamwork has meant my close examination of their drafts and forcing them to accept what I consider better versions of the translation. Rimli has helped in editing the English drafts. Another Buddhist scholar, Miss Radha Banerjee, who joined our Cell a little later was of great help not only for consultations on the subject but also in the logistics of production work in bringing out the volume. Another research assistant of the Cell, Ms. Nidhi Nagpal, has contributed in the making of the Glossary of our volume. Bagya, Nidhi and Mr. Deepak, who is a late comer in the Cell, jointly contributed their efforts in supplementing the details for the final version of the manuscript. Also attached to the Cell were two researchers from the Dunhuang Academy, Mr. Li Chongfeng and Mr. Yang Fuxue, who also contributed to the undertaking. I take this opportunity to thank them all.

It would have been virtually impossible to bring out the book without the cooperation of the Dunhuang Academy, especially its Director, Professor Duan Wenjie. We would have gathered more information and learnt more about Professor Duan had we had more time and contacts with him. Professor Duan is an extremely busy man to contact. Moreover, his personal modesty virtually blocked all our efforts in gathering greater details of his life and work beyond what have already been published.

IGNCA is a fine institution. In the first place, it provides the right environment for Sino-Indian studies which are oriented to the holistic approach in respect of cultural perspective. Secondly, the research resources and infrastructural facilities of this institution have provided the surest guarantee for our venture to be brought out in a relatively short time. All the colleagues of IGNCA who have helped us in this regard deserve our gratitude.

Here, I particularly wish to thank the computer operators Mr. Alfred Joy and Miss Neelima Sareen. While we have all worked on successive drafts of the essays in this book, these drafts have finally been processed through the memory of the personal computer. The present version of this book has journeyed through numerous drafts: Miss Santosh Phul, the former, and Miss Rajni Bala, the present Stenographer of the Cell had their share of the collective toil in feeding our original and revised ideas onto the computer, and the electronic typewriter of IGNCA. My sincere thanks are also due to both of them.

Mr. Vineet Kumar, who has the rare distinction of an Indian painter with mastery of Chinese painting styles, has done a wonderful job in doing the art designing and the sketches of the book. His work has helped beautify our volume. I extend my gratitude to him. I also wish to add a word of thanks to Ms. Zhao Meiru of the Chinese Embassy, New Delhi, for helping us to get the Chinese characters in the Glossary printed.

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The book should have been brought out at least a year ago. My prolonged illness interrupted with the preparations for its publication. However, the publishers are helping us to make it in time to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Dunhuang Academy in the midst of an international gathering of Dunhuang experts who will meet at the Mogao caves in August, 1994. My thanks in advance to both IGNCA, its publisher, and to Abhinav Publications, its co-publisher, for such a happy augury.

**Tan Chung**

New Delhi

November, 1993

## A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

<b>PERIODS</b>	<b>DATES</b>
<b>Sixteen Kingdoms</b>	<b>366--439</b>
<b>Northern Wei</b>	<b>439--534</b>
<b>Western Wei</b>	<b>535--556</b>
<b>Northern Zhou</b>	<b>557--581</b>
<b>Sui</b>	<b>581--618</b>
<b>Early Tang</b>	<b>618--712</b>
<b>High Tang</b>	<b>712--781</b>
<b>Middle Tang</b>	<b>781--848</b>
<b>Late Tang</b>	<b>848--907</b>
<b>Five Dynasties</b>	<b>907--960</b>
<b>Song</b>	<b>960--1036</b>
<b>Western Xia</b>	<b>1036--1227</b>
<b>Yuan (Mongol)</b>	<b>1227--1368</b>
<b>Ming</b>	<b>1368--1644</b>
<b>Qing</b>	<b>1644--1911</b>
<b>Republic of China</b>	<b>1912--1949</b>
<b>People's Republic of China</b>	<b>1949--</b>

## Introduction



Sakyamuni Buddha, Cave No. 260, Northern Wei

We Have brought out this volume to introduce Dunhuang art to a wider readership of English language within and outside India. Our book features a picture of Dunhuang art vividly painted by its greatest authority, Professor Duan Wenjie, a man who has spent a lifetime preserving, studying, documenting and propagating the art of Dunhuang. Now in the seventy-eighth year of his life, Duan Wenjie is still the doyen of the Dunhuang studies in China besides being the active Director of the Dunhuang Academy. There is a certain history attached to the fact that this volume, the first of its kind in India, is brought out by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi.

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## A Historic Meeting

On 12th October 1990, a historic meeting took place in the Mogao Grottoes between Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan and Professor Duan Wenjie. The former is an exponent of Indian art as well as an administrator dispensing with matters of art and culture in the Government of India for four decades. The latter is a representative of Chinese culture and art, an art historian and analyst, a custodian of cultural relics in Dunhuang for over four decades. This writer was present at that meeting as a go-between. Another person present in the meeting was Ms. Fan Jingshi, Vice-Director of the Dunhuang Academy.

After a gap of three decades this was the first direct meaningful exchange of views on the art and culture of India and China between their own scholars . The meeting, in a sense, reflected the determination of the two great civilizations to begin a vigorous dialogue and a direct transmission of ideas and exchange of information and insights concerning the two great civilizations of mankind.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan was, then, Member-Secretary of IGNCA. She and Professor Duan Wenjie, Director of Dunhuang Academy, initiated a meaningful start of a long-term collaboration between the two



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institutions. In her usual style of do-it-here-and-now, she made the following offers to Prof. Duan:

- 1) IGNCA to invite a delegation from Dunhuang Academy to visit India to see Indian cultural relics and interact with Indian scholars and experts;
- 2) IGNCA to invite Dunhuang Academy to exhibit the reproduction of the Dunhuang murals in New Delhi to bring them to inform and educate the Indian public;
- 3) IGNCA to sponsor two scholars from the Dunhuang Academy to study Sanskrit and Indian history and culture in India; and
- 4) IGNCA to translate Chinese studies on art and culture and publish them in India for the benefit of Indian experts as well as general readers.

The first three proposals have already been translated into reality. This book is an implementation of Item 4, the first of a series to be brought out by IGNCA about Chinese art and culture. This is a humble contribution from Dr. Vatsyayan and myself personally, and from IGNCA and its Area Studies Division, East Asian Programme institutionally, to the development of Sino-Indian friendship and understanding for future generations.

I must not fail to mention another significant event arising from the first-ever visit to India of the Dunhuang delegation comprising Director Duan Wenjie and his senior colleague in the Academy, Professor Shi Weixiang. Taking advantage of their presence in New Delhi in November 1991, a seminar on the "Cave Art of India and China" was organized under the auspices of IGNCA in collaboration with National Museum and Archaeological Survey of India. Apart from seventeen Indian art historians, archaeologists, museologists and other scholars, scholars from USSR, France and Germany also participated in the Seminar. Mr..N.Deshpande;M.N.Deshpande, former Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India, was the Convenor of the Seminar. The valedictory address was delivered by Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, then Vice President and now President of India.

The Seminar was complemented by three well-attended special lectures on the art of Mathura, Ajanta and Dunhuang on three consecutive days.<sup>1</sup> These lectures became an extension of the Seminar, and brought about a wider interaction between the participants and scholars from other fields. On December 23, 1991, Professor Duan Wenjie also delivered a lecture on Dunhuang at the National Museum to mark the opening of the Dunhuang Art Exhibition in New Delhi.

The Seminar and the four lectures, in addition to the Dunhuang Exhibition, initiated what Dr. Vatsyayan and Professor Duan had desired a year ago --- a vigorous dialogue between the two great cultural traditions of India and China. In addition to the free flow of information and insight, the Seminar and lectures also helped to set aside misinformation and misunderstanding sprung up during long period of separation between the two cultures.

The Exhibition which was on view from December 23, 1991 to February 3, 1992, was a significant cultural event in the Indian capital. The President of India and the Prime Ministers of India and China, the Acting Minister for Culture of the Chinese Government, and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi sent messages of congratulations to IGNCA on the occasion of the Exhibition.

In his message the President, . Venkataraman;R. Venkataraman wrote: "The paintings of these caves were inspired by the message of the Buddha, especially in the form of Avalokiteśvara. The Thousand Buddha caves are a testimony to the devotion, concentration and artistic skills of self-denying monks, the creators of the paintings." He added that "the initiative of a few Chinese scholars and painters who have

organized this Exhibition will enable Indian viewers to experience the beauty and exquisiteness of the originals." He felt confident that "this Exhibition will, furthermore, stimulate comparative research in Indian and Chinese cave art." President Venkataraman visited the Exhibition on January 18, 1992 and viewed the paintings with keen interest.

The Prime Minister of India, Mr. .V. Narasimha Rao;P.V. Narasimha Rao, said in his message:

"Two great civilizations --- India and China --- have been in mutual dialogue for centuries. Both the dialogue as also the distinctiveness have been inspired in no small measure through the spread of Buddhism. Pilgrims from each country have visited the other. The pilgrimage and trade routes provided opportunity for the flowering of creative energies in both the countries. The paintings and sculpture of the Dunhuang caves represent this cultural synergism as do the Ajanta caves of India."

In his message Mr. Li Peng, Premier of the People's Republic of China, said:

"There is a long history of cultural exchanges between China and India. As far back as two thousand years ago, the introduction of Buddhism to China ushered in such exchanges. The opening up and extension of the silk road served as a bridge for direct contacts between the two countries. That was followed by a constant stream of religious, cultural and commercial interchanges. The exploits of the famed Tang Dynasty monk Xuan Zang who went on a pilgrimage to the west for Buddhist scriptures in the seventh century has long been a household story and is viewed as a brilliant chapter in the annals of Sino-Indian friendship. This exhibition of China's Dunhuang Murals in India both testifies to the achievements of our centuries-old exchanges in the religious and cultural fields and plants the seeds for further blossoming of our peoples' friendly contacts. As a link between the past and the future, it is an event of great significance and an occasion for congratulations."

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## The Dreamland of Dunhuang



Dunhuang is situated at the westernmost end of the Gansu Corridor . It is in a valley flanked by the two mountain ranges of Qilian and Beishan, with the confluence of two rivers, Sule and Danghe, forming a series of lakes and saline beaches and the Yushuquan basin --- places which attracted settlers in the past, and tourists in the present.

Dunhuang is a little oasis in the vast Gobi desert which a large number of foreign traders and pilgrims had succeeded or failed to reach in historical times because of the endless ocean of sand separating it from the densely peopled areas to its west. Yet, today, it is probably the most fancied oasis on earth. The dead silence of the surrounding desert is pounded by the thunder of modern jetliners for two to three hundred times a year. In the last several decades it has attracted visitors not only from among scholars, specialists and art lovers, but also politicians and state leaders of China and foreign countries.

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Interior of Cave No. 431, Northern Wei

Dunhuang is situated at the westernmost end of the Gansu Corridor . It is in a valley flanked by the two mountain ranges of Qilian and Beishan, with the confluence of two rivers, Sule and Danghe, forming a series of lakes and saline beaches and the Yushuquan basin --- places which attracted settlers in the past, and tourists in the present.

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Contrary to historical experience, the entry into Dunhuang today no longer lies from the west. Dunhuang is just about halfway between New Delhi and Beijing. But the most convenient way to reach Dunhuang from New Delhi is to fly first to Beijing, and then, transfer oneself to Chinese domestic flights of the Beijing-Lanzhou and Lanzhou-Dunhuang sectors. Once in Lanzhou, the capital city of Gansu province, a visitor finds himself in the midst of the attractions of Buddhist cave art which lie all around him/her.

A one-day tour can be easily undertaken by getting off at the modern monument of Liujiaxia Dam and hydro-power station on the Yellow River, and then taking the launch to sail upstream along the newly created reservoir which now forms a widened course of the river. An ancient Chinese saying goes "Shenren chu, Huanghe qing" (The Yellow River will have green water only if a sage emerges). The foreign tourist today enjoying a cruise from Liujiaxia to the Binglingsi Grottoes riding on green waves all the way may feel the presence of modern sages who are trying to give a facelift to this relatively backward part of the country. He may feel greatly excited when suddenly a huge 27-metre statue of an ancient Indian sage, Buddha, stands before him among the grotesque old rock formations on the right bank. This is Binglingsi which is a Tibetan name meaning the "Temple of a hundred thousand Buddhas". The grottoes have preserved sculptures and murals created from the 5th to the 16th century, comprising 34 caves and 149 niches, 900 square metres of murals, 694 stone-carved and 82 stucco images/dunhuang of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Southeast of Lanzhou, in the vicinity of Tianshui city is another renowned cluster of caves --- Maijishan Grottoes. Maijishan or "Hill of Heaped Wheat" is actually a huge 150-metre-high bamboo-shoot-shaped rock so densely adorned with Buddhist shrines that when one looks from a distance one sees only a mass of honeycombs. The shrines date from the 4th to the 12th century. Although there has been much destruction over the years, including a severe earthquake in the year 734 which split the rock into two and destroyed all the shrines in the centre, there are still 194 caves with more than 7,000 rock-cut and stucco images/dunhuang and 1,300 square metres of mural paintings.

There are a score of other ancient Buddhist grottoes around Lanzhou, including the three giant Buddha figures carved in relief in the Lashaosi cave near Wushan county (the central Buddha figure being 60 metres in length), but the foreign visitor's first destination from Lanzhou is surely Dunhuang, at a distance of three hours of non-stop flying over the Gobi desert and the snow-capped Qilian range. There is an evident attempt at afforestation in Dunhuang county, and an old visitor always finds new trees, new fields and new modern hotels on every successive trip. If the oasis of Dunhuang is thriving today it is mainly because of the importance of the Mogao Grottoes. In earlier times, it must have been much more prosperous and dynamic, otherwise the extravaganza of Buddhist art in Dunhuang would not have been there.

The magical name of Dunhuang had existed long before Sir Aurel Stein publicized it to the world after he had discovered it in 1907. We have in the *Dunhuang Manuscripts* six hand-written versions of twenty poems entitled "Dunhuang nianyun" (Twenty Hymns to Dunhuang) which were in circulation in the 8th century or even earlier.<sup>2</sup> The sixth poem says:

"Thousands of miles  
Connecting the site  
With the Western States;  
The famous Yang Gate  
Has been here  
A thousand years."<sup>3</sup>

"Yangguan" (the Yang Gate) lies just a few hours' bus journey away from the Mogao Grottoes to the west. The famous Tang poet, Wang Wei (701?-761), wrote his immortal song "Yangguan qu" (Song of the Yang Gate) expressing these sentiments:

"A morning shower rinsed away  
The dust that'd covered Town of Wei,  
Green, green, the place I stay,  
Weeping willows fresh and gay.  
Come, my friend, another drink to cheer  
While you are here at the border area,  
Once you go beyond the Gate of Yang  
No friend of old will you find around."<sup>4</sup>

There was another Gate, Jiayuguan, in the vicinity of Dunhuang which is just a stop away by air from Lanzhou or Dunhuang. Historically, the two gates had controlled the gateway to China from the Han Dynasty onwards until the area of Xinjiang (Chinese Turkestan) was brought into Chinese territory during the Manchu Dynasty (1644-1911). Dunhuang, as the administrative headquarters controlling these two gates and the adjacent areas, became itself the gateway of China for one-and-half-millennia. Although it was an oasis deep in the Gobi desert, garrison troops, transit caravans and travelling diplomats and other officials frequented it and contributed to its importance and prosperity.

I remember my first trip to Dunhuang by train from Lanzhou in 1983. The nearest railway station, Liuyuan, was about two hundred kilometres away from Dunhuang. A jeep sent from the Dunhuang Research Institute (now the Dunhuang Academy) carried the two of us, the driver and myself, bumping all the way in the endless desert at night. I suddenly felt that I had entered a world without living beings; the only things moving were two men and the machine of four wheels. But, there was something pulling us ahead. I recalled what the fifth century Chinese pilgrim, Faxian, had written when he was travelling across the desert (the same as I was crossing): there was neither a road, nor a sign to read. The only road-signs available were the skeletons of the dead. Wherever the dead lay, there lay the road to India. What a thought!

How admirable were the pioneers who in their quest for Buddhaharma had set aside all other personal considerations; not even the sight of the dead lying all over the desert could daunt their enthusiasm for their travels! At that moment, I was overwhelmed by a current of warm emotion that I, too, was on the same track. Being the descendant of Faxian and Xuanzang, I was on my way to rediscover the brilliant chapter in the annals of Sino-Indian contacts which was written by the spirit of dedication and self-sacrifice which the Gobi Desert has stood as our witness.

I had seen the caves of Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad in India, and those of Yun'gang and Longmen in

China before my first visit to the Mogao Grottoes. At the other cave sites you could see something extraordinary even at a distance, and you automatically exclaimed "Wow!" even before entering the caves. Here at Dunhuang, the external appearance was ordinary, if not unimpressive; but no sooner had you stepped into any one of the dark rooms than were you suddenly seized by the feeling of entering into another world.

Once you were inside the caves it was hard to believe that the celestial beings of Mogao were ever exposed to the elements or subjected to the wear and tear of time; you were surrounded by an atmosphere of ageless preservation. Here you saw for yourself 492 caves sheltering a total of 45,000 odd square metres of wall paintings in addition to 2,415 colourful stucco images/dunhuang of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When you saw the murals you immediately remembered Ajanta; but, Mogao was not just one replica, but several hundred times as large as Ajanta. Ancient paintings covered every inch of the surface of the well-preserved caves except the floors. They were there on the ceilings extending right through the passages. They were composed with such a wealth of details that you could spend a whole day viewing the contents of just a single cave. The staff of the Dunhuang Institute who accompanied me for two days told me that even those who had spent decades of their lives in the Grottoes could not exhaust their chances of coming across hitherto unnoticed details. Both Professors Duan Wenjie and Shi Weixiang made similar observations during the 1991 Seminar in New Delhi.

I still recall my conversation with the driver who had driven me through the desert. As we conversed, I suddenly found the bumpy road giving way to a smooth highway. We had a comfortable ride for about ten kilometres and then returned to the bumps. The driver told me that the government had run out of funds and could not continue the construction of the highway as the mud needed for paving the smooth road had come from hundreds of miles away. Later, when I stood before the wall-to-wall Mogao murals and its huge Buddha statues I was wondering from what great distance had come all the materials required to build up such magnificent and gigantic art edifices and what immense costs all this had involved. For the creation of art on such a grand scale, not only good mud had to be brought from hundreds of miles away, but much greater efforts were required to bring artists, craftsmen, instruments, paints and other materials from faraway stations transported on human and animal backs. The art of Dunhuang was made possible by a combination of pious devotion, generosity in donation on the part of the Dunhuang elite, and self-denying sacrifice and immense toil and suffering on the part of the labourers. The quantity of talent, knowledge, wisdom and imagination which had gone into the edifices were unmeasurable. It was the immense human efforts which had created this Dunhuang treasury --- one of the most noble and meaningful creations of human civilization.



Facing the Mingsha hill where the Mogao Grottoes are situated is Sanwei hill. According to legend, these two hills form a "holy shrine of Buddhism" because one can see "lingguang" (the holy light of the Buddha's magical power) emitted from the Sanwei peaks during sunset. Actually the miraculous scene in the sky is emitted from the mica rocks on top of the hill. Today, the real miraculous sight is not the one above the Sanwei hill, but what we see at the foot of Mingsha hill --- the Mogao Grottoes, which are truly the holy shrines of Buddha.

The Mogao Grottoes are known in Europe variously as the "Museum in the desert" and "Library on the walls". Today, it is a "longtou" (dragon's head), i.e., fulcrum of modern international tourism enshrined in the magical name of the "Silk Road". In the decade between 1978 to 1988, the Mogao Grottoes have received more than 890,000 visitors which included 110,000 foreigners. In the last five years the frequency of visitors has increased many times.

Exterior view of Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang

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## History of Dunhuang and Mogao

Created by nature to be an important stop-over in the Gobi desert as well as a defensible stronghold, Dunhuang was destined to be a geographical and strategic keylink in history. Its importance was first discovered by Emperor Wu of Han (140-87 B. C.) who established his forward posts here to fight China's arch enemy from her northern neighbourhood, the Hun (*Xiongnu*) tribes. The emperor sent out an important courtier, Zhang Qian, to strike alliances with the kingdoms in Central Asia. Following him, later military expeditions despatched from Dunhuang went further afield. It was at this juncture that the Dunhuang area fell under Han imperial administration. Dunhuang was the westernmost of the four new *juns* (provinces) of the Hexi Corridor established by Emperor Wu to break the backbone of the Hun tribes. A military command was established at Jiuquan which was flanked by Dunhuang on the west and the two other provinces of Wuwei and Zhangye on the east.

Two well-known stories dating from Emperor Wu's westward expansion are connected to Dunhuang. The emperor obtained a gift of a special breed of horse known as "Hanxue Ma" (literally, "A horse that sweats blood"). The emperor was so elated that he christened the steed "Tianma" (Celestial Horse) and composed a song celebrating his booty. Long before the Dunhuang caves were carved out and celestial horses painted on their walls here had been a real "celestial horse" which had journeyed across Dunhuang on his way to the Han imperial stable.

The emperor added a more important item in his booty from the possession of a vanquished Hun chieftain. This is referred to in Chinese historical documents as "Jinren" (metal/golden men), i.e., a couple

of metal statues of the Buddha. In Cave No. 323 of the Mogao Grottoes cut in the beginning of the Tang Dynasty in the 7th century, there is a mural painting which identifies this booty as having inspired the despatch of the reason behind the Zhang Qian mission. The inscriptions on the painting say that the two metal statues (each more than ten feet in length) were installed in a shrine in the Ganquan (Fountain of Amrita) Palace, and the emperor regularly paid homage to them. As the emperor could not identify the deities, he despatched Zhang Qian to the "Western Kingdoms" (*xiyu*) to find out the truth.<sup>5</sup>

We know that Zhang Qian was the first Chinese on record to have heard about the existence of India while he was in a state called "Daxia" (identified as Bactria), and his report to Emperor Wu about his "discovery of India" led to a number of futile missions sent from the emperor's court with an aim to establish direct contact between the Han Empire and India as early as the 2nd century B.C. However, as far as I know this early Tang painting is the first reference to the statues being attributed as Emperor Wu's motive behind despatching Zhang Qian to Central Asia. One may suspect that the creators of this painting were keen to establish that the advent of Buddhism in China was a consequence of the two historical events about the Buddha statue and the Zhang Qian mission.

The importance of Dunhuang as the gateway of ancient China's contacts with the outside world is clear from the above discussion though we have only used the legend and painting as evidence. Undoubtedly, Dunhuang lay on the route of the outward journeys of Zhang Qian and many Chinese ambassadors and generals towards foreign lands on the one hand and the incoming journeys of "Celestial Horse" and "metal statues" and people and objects entering China, on the other.

Dunhuang also has a close connection with the famous "Yumen" (Jade Gate) in history. The famous historian, Xiang Da, believes that the location of the "Jade Gate" during the Han Dynasty was at Dunhuang itself, but the administrative setup of the namesake moved towards the east of Dunhuang during the post-Han period.<sup>6</sup> The treasured commodity of jade was used as a symbol in the name "Jade Gate" to suggest that it was the gateway for prosperous foreign trade.

That Dunhuang and its surrounding areas saw heavy concentrations of military and civil personnel and were the locus of much activity is substantiated by the modern discoveries of a large number of wooden and bamboo messages which had been used in these areas during Han times. Incidentally, the first modern discoverer of these long buried Han messages was the same European discoverer of the Dunhuang caves, Sir Aurel Stein. He undertook excavations in both of his expeditions, in 1906-8 and 1913-15, and obtained 789 pieces of these bamboo and wooden messages which are now preserved in the British Museum, London.

Following in the footsteps of Stein, the Chinese undertook two excavations of the Han ruins in trans-Dunhuang area. The first excavation took place in 1944 which yielded 830 pieces of the Han messages. The second took place in 1979 which yielded 1,217 pieces of Han messages, most of which were made of wood rather than bamboo.

One hundred and fifty kilometres of the Great Wall along with 70 odd watch-towers built by the Han defenders still exist in Dunhuang county. This fact and the contents of the Han messages reveal that Dunhuang was the headquarters during the Han operations against the Hun tribes. Troops of the four Han commands --- Pingwang (Conquest of Wang); Pohu (Breaking the Huns); Tunhu (Swallowing the Huns) and Wansui (Ten thousand years of longevity for the Chinese emperor), participated in the operations, and extensive cash awards in gold were given to the fighters of meritorious deeds.<sup>7</sup>

Very recently, the ruins of a Han postal station were unearthed 64 kilometres to the east of Dunhuang, leading to the discovery of more than 17,000 pieces of cultural relics which included wooden and bamboo messages and papers. The antiquity of these pieces could be traced back to the year of 94 B.C. during

the reign of Han Emperor Wu. This discovery may lead us to conclude that present-day Gansu, i.e., the Hexi Corridor, was the earliest region in the world to invent and use paper (170 years before the renowned Chinese inventor of paper, Cai Lun). Here we have an additional evidence of the importance and prosperity of trans-Dunhuang area during the Han Dynasty.

Scholars are still debating on the earliest date for the Mogao Grottoes; many posit their origin in early 4th century. The usual date, which is 366, is based on Li Junxiu's book, *Fokan ji* (An Account of Buddhist Shrines), written during the reign of Tang Empress Wu (684-704). This dating is corroborated by an inscription on the northern wall of Cave No. 300 of Zhang Daqian's index. In both the accounts the name of a monk, Yuezun, appears with a legend of his vision of many Buddha images/dunhuang at the site of the present Mogao Grottoes, which eventually inspired him to cut out the first cave on that spot.<sup>8</sup> Scholars often cite this legend as the origin of "Qianfodong" (Thousand Buddha Caves), the name by which the Mogao Grottoes used to be known.

In the course of our Seminar on "Cave Art of India and China" (November 1991) it was suggested that the term "Thousand Buddha Caves" (originating from the writings of Stein) was a misnomer; the correct translation of the Chinese term "qianfo" should be "thousands of Buddhas".<sup>9</sup> I am inclined to uphold the usage of "a thousand Buddhas"; since as a literal translation of the Chinese "qianfo", "thousands of Buddhas" is no better than "a thousand Buddhas". This is because the Chinese usage of "qian" in this context is symbolic, not an indication of any specific number. There are "Qianfodongs" in the Longmen grottoes as well as in others, and the term "qianfo" only indicates that there are innumerable images/dunhuang of the Buddha painted or carved on the walls. "Qian" (thousand) merely underscores this phenomenon of innumerable statues. Anyone who is familiar with Dunhuang art knows that apart from Mogao there are other caves being called "Qianfodong" (Thousand Buddha Caves), e.g., a "Xi qianfodong" (Western Thousand Buddha Caves), a "Dong qianfodong" (Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves) and a "Xiao qianfodong" (Small Thousand Buddha Caves) in the surrounding areas, although numerically, the Buddha images/dunhuang in these three grottoes do not add up to the figure of one thousand. There are also "Wanfodong" (caves of ten thousand Buddhas) which are of much lesser scales than the Mogao grottoes. Thus the logic of translating the word "qian" into "many thousands" does not hold good. Furthermore, the Chinese term "qianfo" is also a slang, connoting "miniature Buddha figures". I suspect that only the caves which had either miniature Buddhas painted or carved on the walls, or had a substantial number of Buddha images/dunhuang would have earned the name "Qianfodong" --- which is the real meaning of "Thousand Buddha caves".

In his "Mogao Yulin er ku zakao", Xiang Da has cited a reference from *Jinshu* (Annals of Jin Dynasty) which says that an officer by the name of Suo Jing (who died in 303) had inscribed the words "Xian'yan" (Fairy Rock) at the site of Mogao; this could mean that it had already been an important Buddhist shrine in the beginning of the fourth century. But the early creators of the Mogao caves have largely escaped Chinese written history. The names of Yuezun and Faliang have come down without any biographical details.

The earliest patron of the Mogao grottoes who can be traced in Chinese history was, according to Xiang Da, Yuan Tairong (or Yuan Rong), the governor of Guazhou during the Northern Wei period. He was a peer of the Toba ruling family holding the rank of a duke and was posted as the overlord of the Dunhuang area at least in the thirties of the 6th century. In various historical accounts he is credited with the creation of the illustrations of a number of sutras in the Mogao caves.<sup>10</sup>

A unique feature of the history of Dunhuang was its relative political stability in contrast with the chaos prevailing in north China between the third and the seventh centuries. In the wake of the Western Jin, sixteen political regimes emerged in north China most of which were of alien origin. The only exception was the Northern Liang (301-376) which was established by the Chinese governor of Hexi, Zhang Gui,



and his descendants.

At the time when the Zhang family had a firm control over the trans-Dunhuang area, the other parts of north China were in utter confusion. Those in the politico-economic centres who could afford to migrate to other provinces took refuge either south of the Yangtze where Chinese ruling regimes still held sway, or westward to the realm of Zhang at Dunhuang and the surrounding areas. This added to the importance of Dunhuang as a cultural centre.

In a sense, Dunhuang was not politically disturbed from the Han Dynasty onwards upto the seventies of the fourth century and could therefore sustain a continuous development of the indigenous Han culture represented by both the Han and Jin dynasties. This provided a strong cultural base for Dunhuang enabling it to both absorb Indian traditions of Buddhist culture and art and to further develop Buddhist art in newer directions.

During the Tang Dynasty, the Dunhuang area witnessed much increased international trade and border tension. Tubo (Tibet) and Tujue (Turk) emerged as the two powerful and ambitious neighbours ready to intrude into Chinese territory. The Tang government augmented its garrison forces in the area to meet the new challenges. Population of Liangzhou province where Dunhuang was located increased from 33,000 to 1.28 million in about a hundred years after the establishment of the Tang empire.<sup>11</sup> The Tang government took two important decisions which had a great impact on the development of the Dunhuang area. The first was to develop the horse industry by patronizing private horse farms. The government left no stone unturned to import the good breeds of horses from Central Asia. The second was to ask the garrison troops to reclaim virgin lands and produce foodgrains for their own consumption. This was necessary since the state supply machine could not raise and transport enough foodgrains for the huge garrison troops in the Dunhuang area. Many official and unofficial documents about the Tang garrison farming system had been preserved in the Dunhuang caves which are now scattered in various libraries in London, Paris, and other places.

As we know Dunhuang art reached its highest development during the Tang period. This is closely related to the great importance of the Dunhuang area in the governance of the Tang Dynasty. The distance between Dunhuang and the Tang capital, Chang'an, was greatly shortened by the imperial court's close monitoring of the affairs of the Dunhuang area and the brisk communications between the imperial house and the garrison generals of the Dunhuang area. Dunhuang seemed to respond to the intentions of the imperial court very promptly. Empress Wu was keen to prove the point that she was the reincarnation of a Bodhisattva, hence fit to become China's reigning queen. She ordered that Buddhist temples, particularly the Dayun si (Great Cloud Monastery), be built up all over the country. It was this directive which enabled us to see many gigantic caves with paintings, stucco images/dunhuang and a huge carved Buddha come up in Dunhuang during the reign of Empress Wu.

### **Periodization of Mogao Caves**

The Dunhuang Academy has spent decades of efforts to identify the contents of the Mogao paintings and stucco images/dunhuang and has published its findings some years ago.<sup>12</sup> The publications have categorized the contents into the following periods:

1. The period of Sixteen Kingdoms (366-439): seven caves.
2. The Northern Wei period (439-534) and Western Wei period (535-556): ten caves in the early phase, and ten caves in the later phase.
3. The Northern Zhou period (557-580): fifteen caves.
4. Sui Dynasty (581-618): seventy caves.

5. Early Tang, the first years of the Tang Dynasty (618-704): forty- four caves.
6. High Tang (the period which witnessed the high tide of the Tang imperial power, 705-780): eighty caves.
7. Middle Tang (the phase of decline of the Tang power, 781-847) also known as the Tubo (Tibetan) period because Dunhuang was under Tibetan occupation: forty-four caves.
8. Late Tang (the last phase of the Tang Dynasty, 848-906, during which Dunhuang returned to Chinese rule because of the military feat of a local general Zhang Yichao): sixty caves.
9. The Five Dynasties (907-923): thirty-two caves.
10. Song Dynasty (only the early part, 960-1035): forty-three caves.
11. Western Xia (1036-1226): eighty-two caves.
12. Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty (1227-1368): ten caves.

It is no easy task to sort out the problem of periodization among the 492 caves left behind by a history of seventeen hundred years full of vicissitudes. We salute the researchers of Dunhuang Academy for their monumental task although allowances for inaccuracies can still be made. In sorting out this historical mess at Dunhuang, the Academy has not only been backed by the academic resources of entire China, but also by the richness of China's historical tradition. There are thousands of tons of archival documents for researchers to wade through.

It was this rich archival resources that have been put to good use by the Dunhuang Academy. In a way, the historical orderliness in the study of Dunhuang art is a result of Chinese sensitivity to historicity. This is not to take away the credit which is due to Professor Duan Wenjie and his colleagues of Dunhuang Academy, particularly Professor Shi Weixiang.

We have translated in this book four articles of Duan Wenjie which provide a chronological overview of the development of Dunhuang art. In these four articles Duan Wenjie has virtually reworked the nine dynasties periods of Dunhuang art into four historical phases:

- (1) Pre-Tang--4th to 6th century
- (2) First half of Tang--7th to 8th century
- (3) Second half of Tang--9th to 10th century
- (4) Post-Tang--10th to 15th century

This is obviously a Tang Dynasty-oriented division, highlighting the great achievement of Dunhuang during the Tang period which is traditionally regarded as the golden period of cultural development in China, like the Gupta Period in India.

Dunhuang art during the pre-Tang phase can be described as a new-born baby growing into an adolescent. It may also be likened to a joint venture in its initial period when imported components occupy a dominant portion in its production. Indigenization is still at an early stage. In his article, however, Professor Duan quite firmly emphasizes the national art traditions of the Han and Jin dynasties, and draws frequent comparisons between the Dunhuang paintings and the pre-Mogao tomb paintings in Hexi and other Chinese areas.

The important pre-Tang caves are: Nos. 248, 249, 251, 254, 257, 263, 272, 275, 285, 288, 290, 296, 428, 431, 435. In Cave Nos. 249 and 285 there are a lot of paintings which puzzle the researchers and

evoke heated debates in seminars and writings. It is hoped that Indian scholars with a rich knowledge of legends and mythology can contribute new ideas to the debate. My humble submission is that in these and other caves during this phase, Sino-Indian intercultural contact was an open book which should not be interpreted with preconceived notions. Different methods/versions of identifications should be entertained.

Tang Dynasty is usually divided into (1) Early, (2) High, (3) Middle, and (4) Late Tang, with the abdication of Emperor Xuanzong I (712-755) as the watershed. Professor Duan has used this watershed to divide the Dynasty vertically into two halves. The first half, i.e., Phase II (7-8th century) of Dunhuang art is generally regarded as the zenith of achievement in Dunhuang which corresponds to the high tide of achievement in the Tang Empire itself. There is a logical connection or linkage between the two. To pursue our earlier analogy, in this phase Dunhuang art has entered its prime of life; and the process of indigenization is well underway.

The Tang Dynasty had three great rulers, Emperor Taizong (626-649), Empress Wu (684-704) and Emperor Xuanzong I. All the three shared one common experience --- they came to the throne by violating the traditional sacrosanct convention of succession. Their patronage of Buddhism had a personal motivation of acquiring for themselves the Bodhisattva image to wipe off the disrepute of usurpation. Empress Wu was the greatest rebel to Chinese convention which did not allow any place for a woman to hold public responsibility. She was the lone woman in Chinese history to become the "Son of Heaven" (the reigning ruler). It was no accident that the two giant Buddha images/dunhuang at Dunhuang came up during High Tang under the reigns of Empress Wu and Emperor Xuanzong I: the 33-metre "northern giant image" of Cave No. 96 was made in 695 during the Yanzai Era of Empress Wu and the 26-metre "southern giant image" of Cave No. 130 was made in 721 during the Kaiyuan Era of Emperor Xuanzong.

The foursome division by Duan Wenjie is an over-simplification which omits a short but not unimportant dynasty of Chinese history, the Sui Dynasty. We have seen that in a short span of 37 years during this dynasty 69 caves were created in Dunhuang, many of which were of a giant size. The glory of Dunhuang art during Sui had a historical background similar to that of High Tang --- both the emperors of Sui, Emperor Wen (582-604) and Emperor Yang (604-617), were usurpers to the throne, and both were among the greatest patrons of Buddhism in China. The peculiarity of Sui in Chinese history is similar to that of Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.): the fifteen-year-short dynasty of Qin played a pioneer role in unifying China. The systems established by it were followed up and developed by the 400-year-long Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). The same was true of the relationship between Sui and Tang. It is the Chinese convention to treat Qin and Han, and Sui and Tang as a continuous development. Thus, the second phase of Dunhuang art is inclusive of what was achieved during the Sui Dynasty. The important Mogao caves during this period are: Nos. 302, 305, 390, 419, 420 (of Sui), 23, 45, 57, 103, 148, 172, 144, 203, 217, 220, 320, 321, 322, 323, 328, 329, 332, 334, 375, 431, 445 (of Tang).

The third phase corresponding to the second half of the Tang Dynasty was a period during which Dunhuang maintained a separate political identity. During Middle Tang, Dunhuang was under Tibetan occupation, while during Late Tang, the local family of Zhang established its supremacy at Dunhuang virtually free from the long arm of intervention of the imperial government. As Duan Wenjie tells us, Buddhist art flourished during this period, but the spirit of grandeur and magnificence seems missing due to the lacklustre rule of the Tang Empire during this time.

The important caves belonging to the Tibetan period are: Nos. 112, 154, 158, 159 and those of Late Tang are: Nos. 9, 12, 85, 156, 196.

The last phase after the downfall of the Tang Dynasty is a period of decline in Dunhuang art. The

immediate situation of China was that of disintegration and disorder. This period is known as the Five Dynasties in Chinese history. Dunhuang, however, maintained its comparative continuity and stability largely due to the local ruling family of Cao which played a role similar to that played by its predecessor, i.e., the Zhang family. The Song Dynasty was one imperial government in Chinese history which suffered a congenital deficiency in military power, although it was a period of prosperous trade and economic development. The Song government had enough problems with the northeastern invaders (Khitan, Nurchen and Mongol), and could not turn its eyes westward to develop Dunhuang. The succeeding Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty established a trans-European dominion and had a whole world to look after. Dunhuang was losing its importance in the overall situation.

The important caves belonging to the Five Dynasties are: Nos. 36, 61, 98, 146; of Song Dynasty: Nos. 55 and 76; of Western Xia, and of Yuan Dynasty are the Cave Nos. 97 and 3 respectively.

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## Buddhist Paradise in the Caves

Religion is an important cultural force which makes great contributions to culture. Religion enriches literature, art, architecture and other fields of culture. Buddhism is a shining example of this contributory function of religion. How Buddhism has enriched the literatures of India, China and other countries is a well-known fact. But, its contribution to the art of India and China is equally great, if not even greater than that to the Indian and Chinese literatures. Cave art is an invention of the ancient Indian Buddhists who had developed a peculiar rapport between the remote jungles and the bustling centres of humanity. The quest for enlightenment had first attracted them to jungles in the traditional spirit of *sannyāsa*, while their missionary zeal had drawn them back from the jungles to the human gatherings to inform others about the enlightenment they had themselves attained.

A part of the Buddhist process of enlightenment was to create an unreal world to wean people's minds away from the unreality of the material world where ego, greed and false pride dominated. Buddhist cave art was to provide people with refreshing scenes of heavenly bliss. When people saw the solemn and kind images/dunhuang of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, flying angels, celestial musicians and others, their minds were momentarily occupied by a sense of peace, tranquillity, and tenderness, quite forgetting the fevered anxieties and anguish of the material world of profit and power.

Considering the Indian tradition of *sannyāsa*, caves in the remote areas understandably become important cultural centres. China has no *sannyāsa* tradition, but, surprisingly enough, more caves with Buddhist art contents have been created and preserved in China than in India. And the Mogao Grottoes have, in some sense, surpassed all Indian grottoes in grandeur and in the duration of their preservation. How can one explain this phenomenon?

An explanation may, however, be found by examining closely the historical function of Buddhist cave art. It is born neither of escapism, nor of any obsession with the remoteness of the mountains: it is simply that the cave scene is best suited to create a mystic surrounding to accommodate the human imagination about paradise. It is a form of rational unreality, to retreat temporarily from mundane human unreality.

One also must note the qualitative changes in the preachings of Buddhism when it developed Mahāyānism. Mahayana Buddhism distinguished itself from the earlier Buddhist teachings by shifting the focus from achieving individual enlightenment to awakening the entire social consciousness about an alternative spiritual world order. The Mahayana Buddhist world was an overwhelming new

vision under the realm of the Dharmarāja --- Buddha. It was a new world created by the dynamic roles of Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattva was the quintessence of Mahayana philosophy, being the concentration of enlightenment, compassion, dedication and self-sacrifice. It was the Bodhisattva philosophy which greatly attracted the Chinese to the fold of Buddhism. In comparison, India, the motherland of Mahāyāna philosophy, was not so overwhelmed by the Bodhisattva spirit as China was from the 5th century onwards.

The socio-political developments of China also provide an answer. As the largest human collective on earth for the last two thousand years, China has always been the concentration of tension, creativity, wealth, social mobility, power struggles and foreign invasions. When the Indian Buddhist expansion in Asia was at its most vigorous and creative stage (in the first six centuries of the Christian era) China was undergoing a prolonged period of horizontal and vertical human mobility and political instability with many a foreign tribe being integrated into the Chinese political and cultural system. This turbulent period generated a strong desire for an invincible political ideology on the part of the combative rulers and a longing for a better world to live in on the part of the common people. Buddhism, particularly of the Mahāyāna variety, could offer some satisfaction to both.

A salient feature of Dunhuang art is its wealth of details about the brave new world of Buddhahood promising salvation to all. For most people, whether they were aware or ignorant of Buddha's teachings, this world had all the attractions to offer. The colourful and magnificent paradise, the learned preachers of the dharma, i.e., Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, their eager and receptive audience in the company of the flying angels who shower petals from the sky, and the active musicians whose melody you can easily see in your imagination --- all make up a universe of love, harmony, joy and beauty. The art extravaganza in Dunhuang symbolizes the celestial extravaganza of the Buddhist cosmogony. In addition, there is the reiteration of compassion, humaneness and self-sacrifice through the detailed illustrations of Jātaka stories. It adds a dimension of nobility to the colour and grandeur. Yet, everything is very Chinese, with the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and flying angels having Chinese features for the most part, in addition to the Chinese landscape and living details of Chinese traditions and customs. Even Chinese historical events and cultural heroes figure in the paintings which are primarily meant for the propagation of Buddhism, a dominant Indian cultural tradition.

Mahāyānism is a philosophy which has a semi-scientific mind in observing the universe. The Chinese literature, particularly the Tang poetry, has digested one of its scientific imaginations which is expressed in Chinese language as "Hengsha" (the sands of the Ganga). What this bisyllabic word conveys is the Mahayana concept that there are as many universes as there are sands in the Ganga. Though this is not a conclusion after scientific experiments it is a great scientific discovery all right. Again, Mahāyāna philosophy conceives that endless may be the universe it can be reduced to ashes, while every iota of ash can be magnified into a universe. This is dialectics applied with extraordinary imagination --- something in the arena of future science I suspect. I mention all this to say that Mahāyānism is extremely rich in visual imagination. All art forms guided by this philosophy have the task of expressing this visual imagination before the naked eyes. From this viewpoint we might say that the Chinese creators of Mahāyāna art have been even more diligent than their Indian counterparts. Dunhuang art is a shining example of converting this visual imagination into concrete shape and colour. What the Dunhuang builders meant to achieve was to create the Buddhist universe before the eyes of the believers and the laity, and convince them that "fofa wubian" (Buddhadharma is boundless). There is another difference in national character between the Indians and the Chinese. The former are always more imaginative than practical while the latter are just the opposite. For instance, it is only the Indian mind that is capable of imagining the existence of a beautiful paradise, tranquil, clean, full of joy and colour and music. However, while describing all this in detail in the Sutras, the authors add a word of caution that all this is illusory, and that one should not take it seriously. The Chinese mind would not approve such an approach. It could not bring about such a wonderful imagination of the paradise. But,

once it came to know about this imagination it would not allow it to disappear as illusion. Dunhuang art and the Buddhist art created elsewhere have formed a Chinese endeavour to concretize the imagination of the paradise just as the creators of Ajanta and Ellora had tried to do. The difference lies in the fact that the Dunhuang creators had done it with far greater sincerity and seriousness, trying to put in all their energies to convince the spectators that the paradise is real, and well before their eyes.

Like the cave art of other places, the Dunhuang murals and stucco images/dunhuang were of the patrons, by the artists, and for the viewers. The local rulers of Dunhuang and their relatives in faraway places figure prominently among the patrons. There is singular absence of any evidence of substantial involvement of traders and merchants in the creation of art in the Mogao Grottoes. The bulk of the original viewers for whose sake this art was created comprised the ruling elite, the Buddhist (and perhaps Taoist) priesthood, and the visiting government officials, emissaries and traders, but the commoners were not excluded either.

I have mentioned earlier about the numerous caves a tourist can visit today in Gansu province alone. Here is a scenario very similar to the fact that Maharashtra is the cradle of cave art in India. The latter phenomenon is generally attributed to the strategic importance of Maharashtra in ancient India's foreign trade. Now, modern Gansu is situated in the Hexi Corridor of ancient times which had such a strategic importance since the Han Dynasty onwards as has been alluded to earlier. Moreover, the Silk Road that connected the Hexi Corridor with the wider world was a much busier highway of international trade than that existed in ancient Maharashtra. It is this historical and geographical background that provides us with an answer about the prosperity of cave art in Gansu.

The art in the Mogao Grottoes has been preserved so well not only because of the remoteness of the site from human activities such as wars and robbery but also because of consistent human care over the last one-and-a-half millennia. This reveals the popularity of Dunhuang art among Chinese communities both high and low. The Dunhuang literature also testifies to this popularity. There is also reason to believe that this art treasure has endeared itself to foreign visitors throughout history.

In Dunhuang and elsewhere, the ancient Chinese conceived Buddhist caves as temples; each cave created was a temple added. Temple Culture was not a Chinese invention, but one clearly imported from India through Central Asia. By "temple culture" I mean the concentration of wealth, money, manpower, materials, artistic talents and engineering skills that go into the creation of a holy shrine to serve as the cultural centre of society. Prior to the advent of Buddhism in China, there was only the Palace Culture, with a similar concentration of resources to create the grandeur of the king's or emperor's residence.

Temple Culture had an obvious advantage over Palace Culture. The former could be enjoyed by both the rulers and the commoners while the latter was for the exclusive indulgence of the privileged few. China was a land which witnessed frequent incidents of peasant rebellion. The rebel armies hated the palaces and were inclined to destroy the palaces whenever they seized any; they never showed this hostility towards the temples. In other words, Temple Culture was accepted by all the classes in China, some with indifference, others with enthusiasm. Tang poetry, the high watermark of Chinese literature, is replete with descriptions of the poets' visits to the Buddhist temples. Even more extraordinary was the Tang poets' practice of using the walls of the Buddhist temples to inscribe their newly created poems. The famous duo of the eighth century poets, Bai Juyi (772-849) and Yuan Zhen (779-831), must have used thousands of square metres of the temple walls to record their sentiments for each other in rhyme, according to Bai Juyi's own confession. A unique historical event which took place during the eighth and ninth centuries was when the scholars gathered in the imperial capital to appear in the last test in the imperial examination (started during the Tang Dynasty as the main institution of recruitment of high-ranking administrators). Many of the examinees went to the premises of Dayanta (Great Swan pagoda) in Chang'an where the renowned Tang pilgrim, Xuanzang, had lived and worked, to inscribe a poem or

two on the walls.<sup>13</sup> This fondness for Temple Culture also contributed to the popularity of cave art in China.

Temple Culture reached its zenith in China during the beginning of the ninth century when Emperor Xianzong (805-820) started a rage of worshipping the holy relics of Buddha including some finger bones which were said to have been left behind by the Enlightened One. Incidentally, the same finger bones were rediscovered a few years ago, and are now exhibited at Famen Monastery in the outskirts of Xi'an as an international tourist attraction. (Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was scheduled to see them during his historic China visit in 1988, but only the journalists in his entourage saw them.) Han Yu, an eminent scholar-courtier, represented against the Chinese Son-of-Heaven (the Tang Emperor) paying homage to the relics of a "foreigner" (Gautama Buddha). He said that if there was to be retribution for his not showing reverence to the almighty deity he would gladly bear the consequences. Paradoxically, no curse fell upon Han Yu, but the emperor, who nearly beheaded Han Yu for his insolence and went ahead with his programme of imperially sponsored national celebration of the Buddha relics, died suddenly after the gala event as if a spell had been cast upon him. This frenzied festivity took place with hundreds of thousands of people filing in long queues to pay homage to the finger bones after the emperor had first done so. One of the crazy devotees cut off his arm while another put fire on his head in front of the sacred relics to anticipate some miraculous cure. No miracle ever occurred, but thousands of the audience watched the agony suffered by the ones with a bleeding arm and a burning head. The emperor's sudden death added insult to injury while the entire Chinese nation recovered from the excessive enthusiasm for miracles by Buddha.

Han Yu, who is mistakenly considered a staunch xenophobic anti-Buddhist in non-Chinese scholarly quarters, was quite an objective observer without any malice towards the religion imported from India. He composed a poem in honour of a Buddhist head monk and his monastery. The poem refers to a visiting Indian monk by the name of "Sangha" who had built up a monastery in the spirit of "where there is a will there is a way". While the sky was the limit for funds, Tang Emperor Zhongzong (705-709) christened it as "Puguangwang si" (Monastery of Visvabharaja). Han also described the prosperity of the Buddhist Temple Culture:

"For what, may I ask,  
Has the Buddha come from the west,  
While the four seas race forward  
Indulging in building activities?  
Towering mansions and pavilions  
Cut asunder the sky line,  
Throwing rivals far behind."<sup>14</sup>

An even more interesting poem of Han Yu's which has a bearing on our discussion is his "Huashan nu" (The girl of Mount Hua) in which the poet narrated a sensation created in the capital, Chang'an, by a Buddhist nun, who had dressed up like a Bodhisattva inside a nunnery. The citizens of Chang'an rushed to the premises of the nunnery to see the spectacle, and the pseudo-Bodhisattva was summoned to the palace to satisfy the curiosity of the imperial ladies. In the same poem, Han Yu described the Tang capital as a city full of Buddhist pomp and show:

"Preaching Buddhist scriptures  
In the streets west and east,  
The noise of bells and shells  
Deafen the imperial mansions.  
Heavenly bliss to seduce  
And attributions to deter,

Like duckweeds  
The audience gathers."

In the same poem he also informs us that while the Taoists had tried to emulate the feat of their Buddhist counterparts, the few listeners gathered in their temples were like stray stars in the vast sky.

What Han Yu has illustrated in his two poems can be described as an audio-visual extravaganza of Buddhist Temple Culture in China. With its foreign origin and sophisticated theology, Buddhism would not have infiltrated into the Chinese masses had the Chinese preachers not resorted to this audio-visual extravaganza. Once this presentation caught the imagination of the Chinese masses, Buddhist teachings took root in the folklore of China, and through China, spread further afield to East and Southeast Asia.

The Tang Dynasty saw not only the climax of Temple Culture in China, but also the highest achievements in Dunhuang art as alluded to earlier. While Dunhuang art should certainly not be treated as a phenomenon isolated from the universal Temple Culture in China, there is justification to highlight it as a unique culture in its own right, and as a bright jewel of Sino-Indian intercultural synergism.

The historical ruling classes of China did not sacrifice the Palace Culture while embracing the Temple Culture. In fact, they incorporated the Temple Culture into the Palace Culture to make the former serve the latter. From the Dunhuang paintings we can clearly see the attempt on the part of the Chinese ruling elite to invigorate the ruling system by absorbing a part of the Mahāyāna cosmology into China's governing ideology. Paradise scenes figure quite prominently in the Dunhuang paintings. We see the shadows of the Chinese rulers in the characterization of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and we see the female inmates of the Chinese palaces (imperial ladies, maids, singers, dancers and musicians) in the flying figures, celestial musicians and even the attendant Bodhisattvas. The houses depicted in the paradise are in the style of actual Chinese palace architecture.

A distinctive feature of the human faces painted and moulded at Dunhuang during the Tang Dynasty and even afterwards is the double-chin. A typically perfect face was created during the High Tang at the Fengxian temple among the Longmen caves near Luoyang --- that of the standing giant Vairocana Buddha which has impressed many a foreign dignitary, including the Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao. The statue is considered as the best sculpture ever made in China. The face is the combination of compassion, wisdom, tranquillity, handsomeness, and, last but not least, prosperity. Quest for prosperity is a Chinese psyche. The double-chin is the very symbol of prosperity. Not only the Vairocana Buddha of the Longmen caves has the double-chin, but the images/dunhuang of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, flying figures created from the Tang Dynasty onwards at Dunhuang all have double-chins. Not only that, all the portraits of the patrons and their family members, even the maids have double-chins. Double-chin is, thus, a human sign of prosperity transposed to the images/dunhuang of the celestial beings. This is also an evidence of the intermingling of the Palace Culture with the Temple Culture in China.

Buddhist preachers in ancient India created a duality in their representations of the two worlds: they painted the mundane world in dark colours and then offered an alternative world of Buddhahood steeped in heavenly bliss. Under the influence of Confucianism, the Chinese cultural tradition emphasized the inherent goodness of men. "Everyone can become a sage" (*Renjie keyi wei Yao Shun*), claims the Chinese saying. It was on the basis of this idea that Chan/Zen Buddhism gained its mass following in China with its propagation that every human being was a potential Buddha. In this connection, I have found a very interesting article by Professor Jiang Boqin of Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou which described Dunhuang as one of the earliest bastions of Chan Buddhism in China. The article mentions that in the Mogao Caves No. 144 and No. 196 of Late Tang we find inscriptions depicting the patrons as people who had achieved "dunwu" (instant enlightenment).<sup>15</sup> This is an important revelation showing the

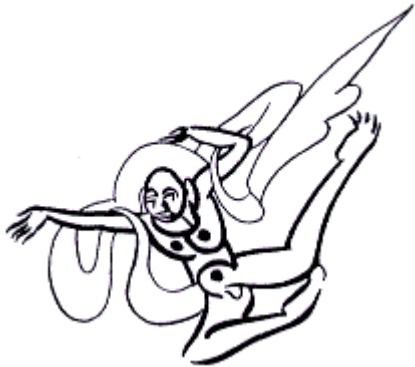


eagerness of the creators of some of the Dunhuang caves to enlist themselves in the Buddhist holy order. This underlines a part of the mundane motivations in the creation of the visual extravaganza of Dunhuang, viz., to glorify their own association with the Brave New World of the Buddha so that their prominent social standing on earth would long endure. To such builders of the Dunhuang art caves, to exhibit the glories of Buddhist paradise was like exhibiting their own riches and luxuries. In this way, they also transformed the Heavenly Bliss into their own properties. This is not a strange phenomenon in ancient and modern India where we see the creation of magnificent temples as an expression of household splendour. ( A business house of modern India is the most enthusiastic builder of Hindu temples in all the big cities and important places of the country.) This is happy marriage between Temple Culture and Palace Culture. This, in a way, is a significant and positive aspect of China's absorption of ancient Indian culture and art.

Art is for popular appreciation, but it essentially serves certain social needs. The wealth of iconography in Buddhist art in general and in Dunhuang Buddhist art in particular, clearly indicates the sophisticated social functions which symbolism is intended to serve. We should have no difficulty in relating this art to the history of the socio-cultural reality of Dunhuang.

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## Visual Glory of Ideology



Some fundamental questions have to be asked in our discussion of the magnificent phenomenon of Dunhuang art: (1) Is it an expression of religious faith or artistic pursuit, or both? (2) If it symbolizes both religious faith and artistic predilection, does it mean that the creators of Dunhuang art have adulterated their religious authenticity with mundane concerns?

Cave No. 428, Northern Zhou

Before directly answering the first question, let us reflect on the Indian religious art the style of which was set up by the ancient Buddhist art. One thing that strikes any viewer of Indian religious art is the obvious intention to depict the fair sex, even the goddesses, with a passionate mundane perspective. The extreme example is, of course, the Hindu sculpture of Khajuraho. The Buddhist discipline in ancient India was quite strict about womanizing. It is clearly stated in the scriptures that any male inmate in Heaven (Chinese term "Tianzi") would be banished to mankind or Hell if he is momentarily seized by sexual passion while living with the female inmates there (Chinese term "Tian nu"). Yet, we see in Ajanta and elsewhere that women have been depicted by the creators of ancient Buddhist art to appeal to male sensuality. I am making this observation not to debase the nobleness of Buddhist art, but only to highlight an internal contradiction between the ancient Indian asceticism and the human nature in appreciating the feminine charm and beauty. This religious dilemma of Indian Buddhism has already indirectly answered the two questions posed by us. Religion, after all, is a worldly, human affair. It cannot be dehumanized in life and in art.

It is exactly this dichotomy in religious art which enables the atheists of modern China to regard the Dunhuang art as something of the highest cultural achievement of the nation while making no secret of their antipathy towards Buddhism as a religion. But, it is simply illogical to compartmentalize the aspect of art of Dunhuang art from its religious aspect. Art and religion are symbiotic in Dunhuang art. One cannot imagine that such art achievement could have been attained without the religious inspirations and drive as we have witnessed in the Mogao caves. Thus, we have a holistic answer for Dunhuang art, appreciative of both its religious idealism and humanistic art depiction.

However, there is a silver lining at Dunhuang regarding the sensual appeal. As Duan Wenjie informs us, there are some nude figures in the Dunhuang paintings. These examples belong to the early periods, and are few and far between. One significant modification of female figures in the Mogao paintings is to erase their breasts, particularly in the topless presentations. China had a tradition of strictly non-exhibition of sexual love and passion. In the Tang dynasty, Buddhist preachers in the capital, Chang'an, were accused of telling "obscene" stories to the audience whereas they had actually talked about only normal life stories between men and women. Eventually, such preachings known as "Sujiang" (popular speeches) were banned by Chang'an municipal government. We can see that the Buddhists were under great constraints in presenting their visual discourse to the public. Dunhuang furnishes a typical example of such a prudent and responsible attitude. By and large, what we see in the Mogao caves is not only high standard of art presentation but also dignified moral teachings as well. In other words, the inherent dilemma of religious art has been satisfactorily handled at Mogao. Dunhuang art has achieved a spiritual elevation of the mundane taste while presenting a highly satisfying popular art to the masses.

Hong Yiran, the late Chinese expert on Dunhuang art, thought that Buddhist art in general and Dunhuang art in particular represented a futile experiment in employing a visual medium to illustrate a metaphysical ideology. He cited the illustrations of Mahāparinirvāna in the Dunhuang murals to substantiate his thesis. The Indian concept of Nirvāna, he said, was a complex and sophisticated idea of the destruction of the flesh ushering in the liberation of the ego within the birth-death cycle. This represented a dialectical relationship between life and death, mortality and immortality. Based on this ideology the Buddha figure in the scene of Mahāparinirvāna always had an appearance of ease and tranquillity leading popular Chinese tradition to mistakenly refer to it as the "Sleeping Buddha", while the scene of grief-stricken mourners standing by him (some even cut parts of their own bodies to lament the great loss) ill-matched this tranquillity and contradicted the very conception of Nirvana thus creating confusion in the minds of the viewers.<sup>16</sup>

However, what is regarded by Hong Yiran as a "futile experiment" may, indeed, be one of the most striking successes of Dunhuang art. It is, in fact, one of the most powerful expositions of Buddhist ideology ever created by man. We had a wonderful piece of Mahāparinirvāna in the Exhibition of Dunhuang Art in New Delhi, and most of us who have seen it have felt the impact of the persuasive power of the Buddhist ideology. One can only imagine how much greater would have been its impact in ancient times when religious beliefs had not as yet been challenged by science.

Let us, for a moment, consider Dunhuang art in the wider context of the interactions between the Chinese culture and Buddhism. There is no question of a "Buddhist Conquest" of China (the title of a well-known and very well-written book).<sup>17</sup> China, a culture as highly developed as that of India, accepted Buddhism on her own terms. In other words, Buddhism was never at any time imposed on her; she sought Buddhism voluntarily and chose to conduct Buddhist evangelism in a manner which she thought best suited to promote her national interests. This, in fact, was the basic difference between the fate of Buddhism and that of all other foreign religions which have never succeeded in commanding universal belief throughout Chinese history.

The greatest charm of Indian culture and Indian Buddhism which appealed to the Chinese culture and society lay in its rich imagination and in a refreshing inventory of symbolism. Many among the Chinese ruling elite in history liked the Buddhist symbolism not because of its inner logical perfection, but because of its social functions, the superiority of its cultural content and finally its suitability to the Chinese socio-political milieu.

Bai Juyi was an example of the best and most successful intellectuals of the Tang culture who had first distinguished himself in the imperial examinations, and later had a full scholar-official career, basking in the sunshine of imperial grace. He was also posthumously honoured by the imperial government, the emperor himself composing a hymn to mourn his demise. On the other hand, he also showed strong pro-Indian sentiments by naming himself "Letian" (Devananda) and "Xiangshan" (Gandhamādana). His friend, the poet Liu Yuxi, jokingly described him as a "devil fallen into the holy order" because his predilections were Buddhism, poetry, alcohol and women.

Bai Juyi used to enjoy the best of the worldly life:

"I watch the dancing performance  
Of the jade appearances of women,  
And I listen to recitations of poems  
With rhymes and rhythm ringing golden."<sup>18</sup>

Then there came a change in him after he had accepted the Buddhist teachings:

"Seven articles of true teachings  
Of what the celestials were doing,  
And one fascicle of scriptures  
Enlighten me about the Bodhi nature.  
Hence I come to realize  
The futility of life  
And the dust and dirt so perverse  
That have entered my universe."<sup>19</sup>

After this transformation, the poet began to express a world-view which was just the reverse of his earlier sentiments:

"Though whiling away time in a pub  
No going astray from Dharma as such,  
All music sounds to me hollow  
And charming beauties fallow."<sup>20</sup>

Bai Juyi also composed a poem titled "Guan huan" (Seeing illusions) which saw "huan" (human happiness) as "qi" (grief), and life revolving around "ku" (*duḥkha*) and "kong" (*śūnyā*, i.e., void).<sup>21</sup>

However, in another poem titled "Sengyuan hua" (Flowers in the temple), he appreciated the beauty of the colourful flowering trees inside the Buddhist premises and likened the flowers to the scriptures and the blossoms of wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

In Bai Juyi, Buddhism had recruited a true follower who had not lost his sensitivity to beauty, but only discarded his mundane taste for the things of life which, he felt, appealed only to deluded minds. In a poem he composed in reply to his friend, Yuan Zhen, entitled "He Chenxia" (Morning twilight), he wanted

to sing a hymn for Buddhism. He imagined the Great Compassionate One (*cishi*) whose heart was with the masses of the world --- the one who was flanked by Kāśyapa on the left and Indra on the right, with thousands of Bodhisattvas and millions of spirits and supernatural beings in his audience. He, the Buddha, worked tirelessly to impart his compassion to open the eyes of the blind; his wisdom was like the bright sun shining on mankind, and his blessings, like "ganlu" (*amrita*). How could the natural morning and twilight compare with the magnificence of the Jade Paradise (*yucheng*) of the Buddha?<sup>23</sup> We might say that the paintings on the walls done by the contemporaries of Bai Juyi at Mogao were the visual equivalent of what he had depicted in this poem.



Another Chinese intellectual of a later period, the famous reformist Prime Minister of the Song Dynasty, Wang Anshi (1021-1086), composed a famous poem in praise of the Triratna, i.e., Triple Jewel (*sanbao*):

"With mass following  
The Buddhist procession  
Dignified and solemn.  
I long  
For a trip  
Around Sukhāvātī  
Bodhisattvas and saints  
In blessed company.  
An eternal farewell  
To mundane folly."<sup>24</sup>

We have similar sentiments expressed by the monks who used to reside at Mogao during and before Wang Anshi's time, as seen in the song below written by an anonymous Dunhuang monk of the eighth century:

"The man reborn in Heaven  
From a lotus he emerged  
Angels hover around him  
Petals rotate between spaces,  
And gentle music enchants the sky.  
Here I enjoy the celestial bliss  
Better than I stay in paradise."

And again:

"The man reborn in Heaven  
From a lotus he emerges  
Washing off his mundane dirt  
In the Pond of Seven Jewels,  
Immersed in the culture of Truth  
His nobleness free from abuse."<sup>25</sup>

The poet seems to speak like one who has seen the Sukhavati illustrations on the walls of Mogao Grottoes. When the Buddhist monks meditated and underwent their Dharma-culture inside the caves in front of these paintings, they felt it was "better than staying in the paradise".

All this augments my answers to the questions posed earlier. Yes, we have in Dunhuang art a strong component of religious faith which is only invigorated by the magnificent art. On the other hand, art has remained a faithful instrument at Dunhuang to develop and propagate Buddhism, even as new concepts and designs were explored in artistic technique and execution. Art and religion are in the happy situation at Dunhuang of being symbiotic, co-existing and mutually enriching. The Tang Dynasty witnessed a great development of both Buddhism and Chinese art while Dunhuang basked in its peak of glory. And the decline of Dunhuang art after the tenth century can also be attributed to the decline of Buddhism. Thus Dunhuang offers a remarkable evidence to our holistic perspective that art can hardly isolate itself from the other components of culture. Neither art, nor religion can be studied in arbitrary watertight compartments as is often the case in modern science and even in the social sciences.

### **Indian Component of Dunhuang Art**

It is time now to step into the other space of holistic domain, viz., art and culture belong to mankind as a whole, and no national boundary should be set for the study of any subject, including Dunhuang art. This is not to take away from China her claim for having created the art of Dunhuang. Nor is there any intention to play down the Chinese contribution to the development of Buddhist art in general, and Dunhuang art in particular. In fact, viewed in the holistic perspective, this Chinese contribution is not just for the development of Chinese culture and art, but for that of all people.

If we regard art and culture as a holistic growth of the mankind without the notion of national boundaries, then Dunhuang art can be placed at the midstream of the long river of the Buddhist culture and art which originated from India. The academic content of Dunhuang art is doubtlessly Indian. Moreover, it would be unthinkable that such magnificent Buddhist art could have blossomed at Dunhuang without the expert advice and guidance of people who were conversant with Indian art and culture.

Although we do not have a comprehensive record about the Indians at Dunhuang, traces of their presence and their contribution can be gleaned from various accounts. One of the first Indians at Dunhuang was the guru of the renowned Dharmakṣema (231-308) who was the scion of a Central Asian family settled at Dunhuang for generations. We cannot identify the name of Dharmaraksa's guru who is recorded as "Zhugaozuo" (an Indian Mahāthera). Dharmakṣema changed his Chinese name from Zhi (indicating his Yuezhi ancestry) to Zhu (identification with India) after he began following the teachings of his Indian guru. Later, he became the celebrated "Zhu Fahu" of Chinese accounts. Inspired by his Indian guru, Dharmaraksa also journeyed to India in the latter half of the third century, and returned to China with scriptures and a working knowledge of 36 languages of India and Central Asia. He was the first scholar to establish an office at Dunhuang to undertake the translation of Buddhist scriptures from ancient Indian languages into Chinese. He was helped by a Chinese scholar Nie Chengyuan. From Dunhuang he went to Chang'an and Luoyang in interior China to end his life as a "Dunhuang Pusa" (the Bodhisattva from Dunhuang).

Another eminent Indian who was associated with the Buddhist centre at Dunhuang was Dharmakṣema (385-433). Born in Magadha, he lost his father at the age of six, and became a child labourer, weaving carpets along with his mother for survival. At the age of ten, he was exposed to religious teachings under the popular guru, Dharmayaśā, and, in course of time, became an authority on Buddhism himself. He journeyed to Kashmir, and went on further to Kuca and Dunhuang. In 421, he became a favourite of the Northern Liang ruler, Mengxun, and cured the latter of his illness. When the overlord of north China, Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei, sent for Dharmakshema, Mengxun did not want

to oblige, nor could he refuse. He despatched Dharmakṣema to the Northern Wei court, but had him assassinated on the way in 433.

Dharmakṣema lived on for many years at Dunhuang translating the scriptures and preaching. He propagated the teachings of Avalokiteśvara. It was said that the medicine with which he cured the ruler of Northern Liang was the text of *Saddharma-pundarika* which had just been translated into Chinese by another eminent Indian monk-scholar, Kumarajiva (344-413 or 350-409), entitled *Miaofa lianhua jing*. One of the chapters of *Saddharma-pundarika* was "Pumen pin" (Chapter on Universal Gate) which propagated Buddhism's universal power in rescuing mankind. Dharmakṣema's use of this chapter as a magical medicine introduced a supernatural element into the text, and might have contributed to the chapter becoming a separate scripture entitled *Guanyin jing* (Avalokiteśvara Sūtra). Dharmakṣema himself became a legend and earned the title of "Yibole pusa", perhaps a transliteration of "Bodhisattva Īśvara".<sup>26</sup>

Professor Duan Wenjie has provided important information in his article on the Dunhuang art during the second half of Tang Dynasty that Gunabhadra (394-468) and Amoghavajra (705-774) visited the Dunhuang area during their sojourns in China. Gunabhadra, an Indian monk from Magadha, was an exponent of Mahāyāna doctrine, for which he earned in China the honorific nickname "Monkeyan" (Mahāyāna). He reached China by sea in 435, and was treated with hospitality and honour by the Song emperor Wen (424-453), the overlord of South China. He and Gunavarma from Kashmir were the two eminent Indian guests of the Song ruler, and both were active in preaching and translating scriptures. The Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra was first translated into Chinese by Gunabhadra in 443, into *Lengjiajing*, which was used by another Indian, Bodhidharma (?-536), founder of Chan Buddhism in China, as the main text of his sect. Professor Duan has identified Gunabhadra as a source of inspiration for the Dunhuang art and his visit to Shazhou (Dunhuang) as one of the reasons for the increase in illustrations of sutras in the Dunhuang murals.

A Kashmiri monk-scholar, Dharmamitra (357-442) reached Dunhuang from Kuca in 422. After staying for a few years, he left Dunhuang and went to Nanjing to become yet another Indian guest of the Song emperor Wen. Two hundred years later, Dharmagupta from South India arrived at Dunhuang in 590 and from there went on to the Sui capital Chang'an to become the honoured monk-scholar of Emperor Wen and later of Emperor Yang, both devout Buddhists.

Amoghavajra's original nationality is controversial. While convention identifies him as an Indian as Professor Duan has done, the recent *Zhongguo dabaike quanshu* (Chinese Encyclopaedia), volume on "Zongjiao" (religion), published in 1988 from Beijing, identified him as having come from Srī Lankā. Our holistic approach can accommodate him as one of the great exponents in Sino-Indian intercultural synergism because of his great contributions in popularizing Tantrism in China. His guru, Vajrabodhi (660-731), was an Indian monk and a great Tantric master who ordained Amoghavajra into monkhood in Luoyang in 724. After the death of his guru, he was sent to India with thirty-seven Chinese disciples to pursue further studies in Tantrism. He returned from India to China in 746. His academic excellence aided by his mastery of magical tricks, which have become legendary in China, gave a fillip to the popularization of Tantrism in the second half of Tang Dynasty. Professor Duan has rightly credited him with a significant contribution to the Tantric paintings which came to prominence in Dunhuang art during the same period. An inscription now preserved in the Historical Museum in Xi'an described Amoghavajra as "Sandai guanding guoshi" (The Rājaguru who has baptized three Tang emperors). He was treated as a duke during his lifetime and awarded an honorific title after his death by the Tang government.

I have only cited a few Indian names because of the paucity of documentary evidence. It can be logically assumed that almost every well-known Indian who went to China from Central Asia lived for a while in

Dunhuang, for it was the most important midway station in their long journeys.



### Indian Influence on Chinese Art

Before discussing the influence, we must first acknowledge that the greatest Indian contribution to Chinese painting is the development of art and skill of "human figures" (renwu), one of the four disciplines of Chinese painting. But, so vitally important a genre in Chinese painting was not well developed before the introduction of Buddhist art to China. This reminds me of the story where the enchanting imperial lady Wang Zhaojun was bidding farewell to the Han emperor Wu before being despatched to the kingdom of a Hun chieftain to buy peace. Her profound sentiments were conveyed through her last glance at the emperor, creating an everlasting remorse in the latter.

Bodhisattva, Cave No. 204,  
Early Tang

The emperor then asked the palace painter Mao Yanshou to recapture this very moving parting scene. What artist Mao produced was far below the standard expected by the emperor. The furious monarch immediately put the painter to death for his failure in recapturing that moving, enchanting last glance of the departing imperial lady. Dunhuang art may be regarded as the hightide of this genre. Nowhere in China at any time had so much attention been put into the perfecting of human images/dunhuang as in the Mogao caves, although most of such images/dunhuang were meant to be deities. Our book is the witness of such immense Chinese effort in perfecting human figure painting. In their efforts the artists of Dunhuang benefited enormously by the Indian Buddhist paintings and sculpture. All the oldest Chinese masters of human figures such as Yan Liben etc. made their careers in Buddhist painting. They were self-trained disciples of Indian masters in this field. Though, there was a long process of Sinicization in human figure painting featuring the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as pointed out by Duan Wenjie, the Indian heritage has never been erased from Dunhuang art even in the latter phases. First, the characteristics of Buddha images/dunhuang remained Indian with the extraordinarily long ears, curly hair, sharp nose, rishi's pose, tropical costumes of the Indian Buddha preserved intact. Second, though there had been substantial modifications of the figures of Bodhisattvas, they still carried with them many original Indian characteristics, including the dhoti and the garland. Third, the Indian methods of differentiating various categories of deities and supernatural beings were observed by the book. The stereotype of Buddha in the centre, flanked by disciples, Bodhisattvas and lokapālas was preserved, though with modifications. The Dunhuang human figure painting and stucco image-making is Sino-Indian joint venture, but the Indian infrastructure is unmistakably true. This Indian contribution to Chinese painting eventually filled up a vacuum, viz., helping "human figures" establish as a great discipline in Chinese art.

Dunhuang inherited the conventional Indian pattern of Buddhist art in which everything centres around the focal theme, i.e., the Buddha image. As regards the landscape, the *Amitābha-Sūtra* alludes to only one sun, one moon and one Mount Sumeru in every "small chiliocosm" (*xiaoqian shijie*). Then, a thousand small chiliocosms form a "medium chiliocosm" (*zhongqian shijie*), and a thousand medium chiliocosms form the "great chiliocosm" (*daqian shijie*) which is the Tri-sahasra-mahā-loka-dhātu (*sanqian daqian shijie*). The *Guanwuliangshou jin* (*Amitāyus Sūtra*) says that Mount Sumeru is surrounded by seven continents and eight seas (*qishan bahai*). A recent study points out that highlighting the central theme is ideologically built into the artistic conception of the Buddhist caves.<sup>27</sup> The study shows that what has been created on the walls of Mogao is a complex composition of various dimensions and depths to exhibit the omnipresence of the almighty Buddhadharma.<sup>28</sup> This is indeed a profound observation. If we

look at the scenes, whether those depicting the Jātaka stories, the life of Gautama Buddha, or paradise, there is a deliberate design of asymmetry and imbalance to remind the viewers that there is not just one sequence or level, but several sequences and levels incorporated into space. The logic behind this treatment is to disrupt the perceptions of the common people and to lead them into the endless depth of the Buddhist universe.

Professor Duan has referred to the traditional Chinese style of Ren dayu shan (human figures bigger than mountains) in landscape paintings. I wonder if this style did not derive from the Buddhist strategy of creating depth by deliberately disturbing the natural uni-dimensional proportions. Just as a camera can highlight a central figure by reducing the distant objects into miniature proportions, similarly the proportional enlargement of the Buddha figure in Buddhist cave art results in miniaturization of all, shrinking the sizes of natural surroundings, including mountains --- a typical example of "Ren dayu shan".

Professor Duan has discussed in many places the introduction to China of the Indian "three-dimensional technique" in colouring. From his discussion there seem to be two different streams of three-dimensional painting: one springing from Indian source and another from Chinese source; in the Dunhuang murals of Tang the two streams flowed into a confluence to produce magnificent paintings. Western scholars have often pointed out that Indian sculpture, matchless in its grandeur, must have exercised a great influence on Chinese art, particularly Chinese sculptures from the sixth century onwards.

As said earlier, Dunhuang art is a synthesis between Buddhism and art, providing immense scope for us to study the Indian influence on Chinese art. Dunhuang, in the first place, emulates Ajanta of India in employing artistic talent in the propagation of a religious ideology. This employment is virtually the exclusive invention of Buddhism, although other religions have emulated it and shown equal competence in it. This employment itself brought about a revolutionary change in the nature and social functions of Chinese art. Of course, we have Professor Duan to remind us time and again that Dunhuang art has exhibited a strong dynamism in employing religious propaganda to boost the morale of Chinese regimes, which amounts to "de-religionization" in Buddhist art. Here we see an interesting historical phenomenon of Chinese art first being exposed to religionization, and then starting a process of de-religionization. It is through such an interactive process of development that Chinese art moved into higher and more striking achievements.

In the logic of cultural relativism, Dunhuang art is both an intercultural and intracultural development. First, the culture of Dunhuang had to indulge in an intercultural exercise to allow itself to be externalized. Then it proceeded to internalize the exotic cultural element into its own body. The changes of Dunhuang art during various periods formed a process of intracultural development. Once internalized, Buddhism and Indian culture, Buddhist art and Indian art, became a part of Dunhuang's intracultural development. It is worth noticing that feminization of the deities and the celestial beings began not at the very beginning of Dunhuang art, but during High Tang. As Professor Duan informs us, the Bodhisattvas of Dunhuang during Tang Dynasty were more comparable to the Indian goddesses in posture and temperament than they had been in earlier times. This phenomenon brings out the fly-over type of intercultural and intracultural tracks in contrast to unilinear parallel-track development.

I am trying to analyse Dunhuang art not purely from the technical aspect of artistic execution, but with a macroscopic perspective of cultural relativism. I would very much wish that those scholars who sit on mounds of information will view the development of Dunhuang art from such a perspective. Cultural relativism is the very life of every culture, particularly cultures such as the one to which Chinese art belongs, which have a great vitality to survive long historical vicissitudes. Cultural relativism is a part of the cultural ecology where we do not use arithmetical methods to quantify or enumerate exotic influence, or compare the indigenous and the exotic in a one-to-one equation. As I see it, Buddhism gave Dunhuang art just such spiritual nutrient as the fresh air gives a plant oxygen. This spiritualism created an almost invisible change in the line drawing, colouring, composition and characterization of Dunhuang art. The



absorption of such a spiritual nutrient goes through the process of externalization and internalization, or, in other words, Indianization and Sinicization. This continuous process of Indianization and Sinicization has settled down in the development of Dunhuang art and become its own metabolism.

I am not an artist by training, but am more familiar with the process of cultural relativism in the development of Chinese literature. Tang poetry, for example, has acquired the process of Indianization and Sinicization as its own metabolism. Great Tang poets, like Li Bai (701-762), Du Fu (712-770), Wang Wei (701?-761), Bai Juyi and many others were interacting with Buddhist spiritualism and the great masterpieces of Tang poetry sounded like preachings for peace, compassion and even the Bodhisattva spirit of self-sacrifice with an ardent wish to rescue humanity from sufferings. Yet, such preachings sound so Chinese, so natural, as though they had always been a part of the Chinese ethos which in fact was not.

In the same way Indianization and Sinicization must have become a process of metabolism in the development of Dunhuang art, and through Dunhuang art, to have become a process of metabolism in Chinese culture and art in general. I may have trodden on territories on which I cannot claim a firm standing, but after interacting with Dunhuang scholars in several seminars organized by the Dunhuang Academy and conferences of the Chinese Association of Dunhuang and Turfan Studies in the past ten years, I am gradually feeling confident about my hypothesis that the artistic symbols of the dragon (*long*) and the phoenix (*feng*) which are so integral to Chinese folklore have incorporated some of the supernatural powers of Nāgarāja and Garuḍa through the Sino-Indian intercultural process; Dunhuang art has played an important role in such an incorporation. Those who are familiar with Chinese art may not fail to notice the importance of a set of what I call "Sino-Indian intercultural symbols", i.e., dragon, phoenix, flaming pearl (symbol of *dharmaratna* or *Amitābha*), lotus petals, Mount Sumeru, sea waves, the svastika, among the decorative motifs in porcelain, stone-sculpture, wood carving, palace architecture, emperor's dragon robe, etc. during the Ming and Qing dynasties. I feel that Dunhuang art has definitely played a role in their incorporation into Chinese art.

I may touch here on another aspect, viz., the technique of Dunhuang cave art. For instance, the stucco images/dunhuang at Mogao seem to have adopted the age-old Indian technique of "making images/dunhuang of the deity" which is still prevalent among the Bengal artists who create images/dunhuang of Durgā and Kālī by the thousands every year. Unfortunately, no detailed study has been undertaken about such an important topic. It is hoped that after the publication of this book many Indian scholars and specialists will join the ranks of Dunhuang scholars which, I am sure, will enrich the present state of Dunhuangology.

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## Dunhuang Academy and Dunhuangology

In this section I would like to give a brief introduction to the institution headed by Professor Duan Wenjie as well as to Professor Duan himself who is the central figure of this book. Our story goes back to June 25, 1900, when a Taoist priest, Wang Yuanlu, who was the custodian of the Dunhuang caves, discovered by accident a sealed cave (now Cave No. 17) full of ancient manuscripts, printed material and silk-paintings. While this was reported to the imperial court in Beijing, the priest and a magistrate, Wang Zonghan, started pilfering pieces of their choice. Priest Wang started a small business by selling things out of the collection at throw-away prices in Dunhuang and its neighbourhood. When Aurel Stein reached Xinjiang in 1908, he heard about this repository; it was one of the chief reasons that brought him to Mogao.

Stein, Pelliot, and a number of other foreigners got cartloads of the priceless manuscripts and paintings

transported away from Dunhuang at the cost of a small bribe to priest Wang. Pelliot travelled back to France enroute Beijing, and requested a well-known Chinese scholar, Luo Zhenyu, to edit them into a volume which was published as *Dunhuang shishi yishu* (Manuscripts of the Dunhuang Caves). Stein and Pelliot contributed to make Dunhuang famous all over the world, while the Beijing government remained indifferent. Luo Zhenyu and other Chinese scholars had to manage a travel grant to go to London and Paris to copy the manuscripts by hand and thus make a beginning of Dunhuang studies in China.

In 1941, the famous Chinese painter, Zhang Daqian (Chang Ta-ch'ien), led a team of assistants (including his son, nephew and students) to the site of Mogao and camped there for two-and-a-half years. The team numbered the caves, repaired and copied some mural paintings, and exhibited the copies in the war-time capital, Chongqing, and also published the copies of Dunhuang murals in three volumes. Meanwhile, the historian, Xiang Da, also visited Dunhuang and sent a detailed report about the ongoing damages sustained by the historical treasure at Mogao. He succeeded in arousing a tremendous concern about Dunhuang art among the ruling elites which prompted Yu Youren, one of the top leaders of the Nationalist Government (who hailed from an area neighbouring Dunhuang), to urge the Ministry of Education to establish an institution at Mogao to look after the art treasure.

A small cell consisting of six persons was set up in 1944 known as "Dunhuang yishu yanjiusuo" (Research Institute of Dunhuang Art). The Institute was set up as hurriedly as it was wound up in 1945 in the wake of the Japanese surrender. A year later, after the Nationalist Government had recovered from the excitement of victory, it decided to re-establish the Institute. The task was entrusted to Chang Shuhong, who earlier had been the Director of the Institute. He recruited a number of young art students from Lanzhou, including Duan Wenjie, and planted at Mogao the seeds of an institution, which in course of time has developed into a unique academic campus.

Almost immediately after Chang Shuhong and his team had settled down to work there sounded the gunfire of the Civil War (1947-49). The overwhelming problems of the Nationalist Government as well as the great distance between Nanjing and Dunhuang made it virtually impossible for the Nanjing regime to do much for the historical art treasure.

In September 1949, the People's Liberation Army occupied Dunhuang in its westward march to recover Xinjiang, but the new government was still too busy in taking over the country to pay attention to the priceless Dunhuang treasures. Only in 1951 did the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China take over the institute at Dunhuang and changed it into "Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo" (Research Institute of Dunhuang Relics) which meant entrusting the responsibility of conservation and protection of the monument to an institution which had earlier been set up only for studying its art.

In 1956 Premier Zhou Enlai took personal interest in Dunhuang, and sanctioned a large grant for repairing and protecting the monument. In 1961 the Mogao Grottoes were declared to be a specially protected historical monument by the State Council. In 1962 an inspection team led by Vice Minister, Xu Pingyu, was sent by the Ministry of Culture to Dunhuang, which resulted in another grant for taking up the largest ever renovation works at Mogao in 1,600 years. A 400 metre-long suspended corridor was constructed to provide easy access to each and every cave. In 1964, the Director of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics along with the Vice-Governor of Gansu province visited the Dunhuang Institute which brought yet another round of logistical support of resources and manpower. We have included in this volume the paper presented by Duan Wenjie in our Seminar on "Indian and Chinese Cave Art" which gives us an indication of the Chinese government's attention to the Dunhuang treasure.

There was a time when scholars outside China used to say that although Dunhuang was inside China, Dunhuang studies were conducted only outside China. Professor Duan considered this a stigma and was determined to erase it. Under his leadership, the Dunhuang Academy has taken up research topics in right earnest and has produced many quality research articles. In 1985 when Professor Duan Wenjie was

lecturing at Tokyo, Professor Akira Fujida went from Osaka to Tokyo to congratulate him for the research achievements of the Dunhuang Academy in recent years. Fujida, one among those who had held the view that research on Dunhuang was conducted outside China, conceded that the Academy had the largest and strongest research force in Dunhuang studies today.<sup>29</sup>

The Dunhuang Academy has devoted a large part of its energy in copying the murals of Mogao, Yulin and other grottoes. Until June 1989, forty-three well-established painters had copied 2,251 paintings comprising a total footage of 1,185.63 square metres. Although this is but a small fraction of the murals, it is quite a substantial documentation. The 1991-92 Dunhuang Exhibition in New Delhi has shown us that some of these copies, particularly those done by Professors Duan Wenjie and Shi Weixiang, are masterpieces which have resurrected the life of the ancient Dunhuang art-works and transposed the fixed wall murals to mobile canvases to be viewed by art lovers all over the world. As the murals are gradually deteriorating despite the best efforts of the conservationists the copies can be preserved for posterity. These clearly dated copies can be taken as a point of reference in future in the likely event of some of the murals deteriorating further or even disappearing. We have already had an example of such a copy in the New Delhi Exhibition: the painting "A Tantric master looking in the mirror", Cave No. 465, Yuan Dynasty (1227-1368), is now a priceless possession as the original on the wall from which the painting was copied has now been ruined.

## Life of Duan Wenjie

Born in 1917 at Mianyang county, Sichuan province, Duan Wenjie spent his youth studying in Chongqing, the war-time capital of China. In 1940 he joined the National Art College headed by the famous artist and friend of India, Xu Beihong (better known in India as Ju Peon). When Zhang Daqian held his Exhibition of Dunhuang Paintings in 1944 in Chongqing, Duan Wenjie walked 15 kilometres to see it. The Dunhuang depictions of the Bodhisattvas, celestial musicians, and flying figures gave his eyes entirely new vista which was strikingly different from the works of the classical Chinese masters he had been familiar with. He was particularly struck by the daring imaginations of the ancient Dunhuang artists. In the war years every patriotic Chinese youth was stirred by the call to do something for the nation. Duan thought that he could best utilize his talent in the service of the nation by going to Dunhuang to copy the wonderful murals there.

Duan set off with three classmates from Chongqing for Dunhuang in the summer of 1945 with borrowed money for his travelling expenses. Meanwhile with the surrender of the Japanese troops, the war in China was over. When Duan and his companions reached Lanzhou the entire country seemed keen to move back to the once Japanese-occupied eastern China. The government had wound up the Dunhuang Institute and there was no point in Duan to proceed further west. His three companions were disillusioned and turned back. But Duan Wenjie stayed on in Lanzhou waiting patiently. A year later, the government revived the Dunhuang Institute, and its Director, Chang Shuhong, was in Lanzhou recruiting young artists for the Institute. Duan jumped at this opportunity and reached Dunhuang as one of the devotees of the first batch to the cause to which he has committed himself for the rest of his life.

Duan Wenjie remembers that the contingent of new recruits arrived at Mogao Grottoes on the eve of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Even before he settled down, he burrowed into the caves to feast his eyes on its treasures, "like a hungry bull in a vegetable garden".<sup>30</sup> This was the beginning of a life-long marriage of a young career to China's age-old heritage. Dunhuang became Duan's home, while Duan's own village including his own son missed him. His son was separated from him for 13 years until their reunion in 1956. In 1984, his wife died and was buried in the sand dunes even as he continued with his work as he had done earlier. For Duan Wenjie it has indeed been a long marriage with Dunhuang for 25,000 days

and nights (upto the time of writing).

Duan started his career well in the Dunhuang Institute. After the Institute was renamed Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo in 1949, he became the head of one of the two sections, i.e., the Art Section (the other was the Administrative Section). In 1954, he was promoted to the rank of Associate Researcher (equivalent to Associate Professor). Before the Liberation (1949), he had copied 283 mural paintings with a total footage of 52.72 square metres, while from 1949 to 1989, he copied another 397 paintings (including 56 paintings in collaboration with others), adding to a total footage of 145.9 square metres.

The Chinese say that the journey of life is never a smooth passage, so it has been with the life of Duan Wenjie. In 1957, he became a target of the "Anti-Rightist" campaign, and was subjected to mental torture. He was stripped of his position in the Art Section, while his wage was adjusted downwards by 12 grades, which meant that he was given only 45 yuan (about Rs. 225) as monthly salary. However, as the charges against him could not be substantiated, he managed to retain his foothold in the Dunhuang Institute. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-69) he shared the misfortune of many Chinese intellectuals: he was sent to the villages to "reform" for two years (1970-72). Only in 1979 were all the charges removed from his dossier. Again, it was like the Chinese proverb which says that good fortune smiles on Master Saiweng only after his favourite horse is lost: Duan Wenjie, at the end of all his travails, began to be trusted by the authorities as a dedicated custodian of the historical monuments and a man of tested capability. He was appointed the Vice-Director of the Dunhuang Institute in 1980. Meanwhile, Director Chang was very ill, and Vice-Director Duan was virtually in charge. In 1982 Chang was appointed as an Advisor in the State Bureau of Cultural Relics and Duan stepped into his shoes as the Director.

Under Duan Wenjie's leadership, the Dunhuang Institute has made great advances in various fields, particularly in academic work. In 1981, the Institute brought out a research journal called *Dunhuang Yanjiu* (The Dunhuang Research) as a trial volume. In his "Foreword" Duan Wenjie wrote that though this was an experimental venture it was the need of the hour to open up a garden for Dunhuang studies and to promote national culture as a part of the "Four Modernizations". He appealed to the Dunhuang experts to care for this new sapling and help it to grow. This trial has since proved its worth and *Dunhuang Yanjiu* has established itself as one of the main research journals of Dunhuang studies in the world. The Institute has also hosted two international symposia at Mogao in 1987 and 1990. This writer has participated in both these symposia "representing" India; but it was only in the 1990 Symposium that there was the participation of a real Indian scholar, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan. Although she did not present a paper, she was invited to speak in the closing ceremony and intervene in the discussions. In his summary of the Symposium, Professor Duan wrote:

"During the sessions, an Indian artist and the head of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, was delighted to know from the discussions that the murals, music and dance connected with Dunhuang art were the fruits of intercourses with Indian culture. In her brief intervention she said: 'Buddhist art originated in India, but spread abroad. Whenever it went to a country it got synthesized with the domestic culture, resulting in new styles and in the embodiment of various national characteristics.' Her refreshing views were warmly received by Chinese and foreign scholars alike."<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps, Duan Wenjie stands as a model of an art-custodian whose obsession and love lie in the well-keeping, preservation, documentation, and research of the historical art treasures. Those who have met Director Duan sometimes found him quiet and indifferent to many earthly subjects. But, once the subject of conversation comes to Dunhuang art he is at once a changed man, talking endlessly and spiritedly about what has been done and what has not been, about his future plans, and his interactions with scholars and institutions abroad in the pursuit of Dunhuangology. Sometimes, he even created a mistaken impression that he was a kind of Dunhuang chauvinist which he is not. But it would not be an exaggeration to say that for him Dunhuang is his first and last love. A more hardworking, more dedicated director involving himself physically and emotionally in his duty is rarely to be seen these days. This writer

is witness to the extent of his personal concern about the Dunhuang Exhibition in New Delhi; the slightest problem would instantly draw him away from his sightseeing programmes in India, which was such a rare opportunity for him. There is something very distinctive in him which may be called the "Duan Wenjie spirit" which epitomizes dedication, responsibility, diligence, self-sacrifice and quest for new directions and higher achievements. He remembered how in the hardest days of working at Mogao, the caves made him feel as if he was in "Sukhāvati" paradise. "Amidst the enjoyment of aesthetic marvels of national heritage, I suddenly felt my soul being purified."<sup>32</sup> Duan is a devout Buddhist, who does not worship Buddha, but worships the God of National Heritage --- a Sino-Indian intercultural synthesis.

Today Professor Duan is on the wrong side of seventy which, according to Chinese tradition, is the age of "Guxi" (rarity since ancient times). While we wish him a very long active life and career, the question of his successor is bound to be raised sooner or later. The Dunhuang Academy is in need of fresh talent to shoulder responsibilities of leadership and also to face the new challenges of the ever-changing times. I am happy to learn that Professor Duan has already had plans to groom his successors. It is for this purpose that two young researchers from the Dunhuang Academy have been trained in India under the care of IGNCA. Similar training must have been going on in other countries. When Professor Duan retires one day, history will remember him for his contributions to Dunhuang Studies and the Dunhuang Academy will cherish sweet memories of a long innings which may be called "Duan Wenjie Era".

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### **Duan Wenjie's Studies of Dunhuang Painting**

After this "Introduction", readers will turn to the English translations of some of the important articles written by Professor Duan Wenjie on Dunhuang art. As the chief custodian of the Dunhuang treasure, Professor Duan is, without exaggeration, the most knowledgeable person about Dunhuang art today. It is therefore important for us to read what he has to say if we want to delve into the study of Dunhuang art.

Professor Duan has written not merely a Director's report or a custodian's account book, he has tried his best to look at the treasures of Dunhuang art with the honest eyes of a Chinese artist. More importantly, from his expertise on the painting tradition of China, he has shared with his readers his insights into Dunhuang art. The five major articles and the two seminar papers included in this volume therefore constitute an authoritative source of information and expert opinion on Dunhuang art. This is not to underestimate the value of studies published in western languages. But certainly it is profitable for us to have an "authentic Chinese version" to compare or contrast with the other excellent works done outside China, or outside the Chinese academic system, as it were. I must add here that Professor Duan's basic ideology is identical with the ruling doctrine of the People's Republic of China, and he is rightly held in high esteem among the leaders of the People's Republic of China.

While largely conforming to what may be regarded as the official view on Dunhuang art, it is clear that Professor Duan's personal insights have also shaped in a large measure this official view. In brief, this central thesis is a justifiable celebration of Dunhuang art as one of the most outstanding achievements of mankind in the sphere of art. Professor Duan's basic Marxist concept about religion in general and Buddhism in particular has beaten a retreat in the face of such overwhelming artistic achievement. When we listen to Professor Duan's strong praise for the artistic descriptions of *Sukhāvati* on the Dunhuang walls, we find that even a Marxist artist or art historian can be dumbfounded by a religious culture which is otherwise regarded as opium by the ideological authority, Karl Marx.

Here is a paradox which can be explained only from a holistic perspective. Mankind has travelled down a

long river of civilization and culture. While ideologies are powerful currents, they do not define the entire course of the river. Any honest scholar or art lover, whatever his ideology, will inevitably bow before the achievements of humanity in art and culture. Professor Duan's writings open up an invitation for scholars of diverse cultural backgrounds and ideologies to come together to discuss the Buddhist art at Dunhuang. For, this is an art treasure which belongs to China, India, Afghanistan, and all peoples of the world, and is not exclusive to the Buddhists alone but belongs also to the Confucian, Taoist, Hindu, Muslim and to all religious believers.

Professor Duan's discourse has brought out the international, interracial and intercultural dimensions of Dunhuang art. Any shrewd observer can see that Professor Duan's perspective in dealing with interracial conflicts in the history of Dunhuang is in favour of interracial understanding and amity, whatever may be the historical struggles and conflicts. His discussions on the Tibetan period of Dunhuang are not coloured by any chauvinist bias. He has many good words for the artistic achievements of Dunhuang during the Tibetan period and he has taken cognizance of the Tibetan contribution to the development of art in Dunhuang.

Historically, Tibet is a great civilization. The Tibetan language is the second most important repository (after Chinese) of information about the development of Buddhism into a great Asian religion. Geographically and ecologically, the trans-Himalayan area was one of the most important cradles of world civilization which provided the base for India and China to develop to greater heights. Tibet also played the role of a bridge between the civilizations of India and China; and Tantrism which has been such an important manifestation of intercultural synergism has certainly developed into an intra-Asian universal cult from the shores of Indian Ocean across the Himalayas up to the shores of Asia-Pacific (including Mongolia, North China, Korea and Japan) with a large measure of input from Tibet, Nepal and neighbouring areas. An even more open-minded holistic approach in the examination of Dunhuang art will reveal new dimensions of various cultural components in the intercultural crystallization which is Dunhuang art.

The uniqueness of Dunhuang art is to a large extent the uniqueness of Chinese civilization. It is also the uniqueness of what I would like to call Sino-Indian intercultural synergism. Certainly, it represents the contributions of the civilizations of many ancient races, Kucans, Tibetans, Persians, Uighurs, and a host of peoples in Central Asia which the ancient Europeans so vividly called "Serindia", i.e., Sino-India.

One of China's contributions to interculturalism is the huge repository of information concerning not only China's ancient contacts with foreign cultures, but also about the foreign cultures themselves. For instance, it is now virtually impossible to penetrate deep into Mahāyanā Buddhism --- a brilliant intellectual contribution of ancient India --- without a thorough investigation into the "scholarly forests" of Chinese literature. In this respect, Professor Duan and his colleagues in the Dunhuang Academy, and a large number of Chinese scholars who have worked on Dunhuang studies, have made important contributions in identifying a lot of details painted on the Dunhuang walls by wading through tons of Chinese written materials. The contents of this volume have been greatly enriched by their work, as all of Professor Duan's references are exclusively from Chinese literature, including many which have been rarely tapped by scholars outside China.

Professor Duan is a painter by training and an art historian by preference. It is this background which determines the style and perspective of his writings. It is refreshing to read history as depicted by an artist, although the professional historian may have a different point of view. What has been included in this volume may be regarded as primary material to be worked upon for historians and scholars of other disciplines. It should not be treated as the version, but as one of the versions of the history of Dunhuang art.

Four out of five of Professor Duan's articles translated in this book are from a recent Chinese publication by him entitled *Dunhuang shiku yishu lunji* (A Collection of Essays on Dunhuang Cave Art), published by the Xinhua Bookshop of Gansu province at Lanzhou in 1988. This book was brought out in commemoration of Professor Duan's forty-year-long career as a custodian of Dunhuang art (1946-86). It is considered to be a milestone in the study of Dunhuang art not only in China, but all over the world. Due to constraints of space and to avoid repetition, we have not translated all the fourteen articles of this seminal work. Only those who can read Chinese (including Classical Chinese) can make up the loss of not having access to the remaining nine articles that are not included in this book.

To make partial amends, I shall briefly sum up the contents of the nine articles missing in this collection. There is an article on "Dunhuang bihua gaishu" (A General Survey of the Dunhuang Mural Paintings) the main features of which are more or less covered in the articles presented in this volume. Another short article on Professor Duan's experience in copying the murals is not substantially different from the second paper delivered by him at the New Delhi Seminar and which is included at the end of our book. Two similar articles, one entitled "Dunhuang zaoqi bihuade fengge tedian he yishu chengjiu" (Style and Artistic Achievements of Dunhuang Murals in the Early Periods), and another entitled "Zaoqide mogaoku yishu" (Mogao Cave Art in the Early Period) share a lot of common points with the first two articles of this volume.

Professor Duan's "Xinxiangde lishi" (History of Symbolism) has offered an attractive title; on closer examination, this turns out to be one of his earliest articles written in 1979 for the Journal of Lanzhou University, to introduce the historical significance of the Dunhuang murals. As it is a general survey, a substantial part of this article has been incorporated in our selections.

The other five articles that our readers will miss are of particular interest to the specialists concerned and not equally so to the general reader. The first of these is "Dunhuang caisuo yishu" (Art of Coloured Stucco at Dunhuang) which has many interesting discussions and useful information about one of the twin branches of Dunhuang art. Here again, many details from this essay find a place in the contents of this volume. A point worth noting is Professor Duan's observation that the creation of deities in such large numbers in Dunhuang could easily lead to stereotypes and monotony. However, the outstanding achievement in the creation of the Mogao stucco images/dunhuang is that they show hardly any stereotype. Every stucco image has its own distinctive nature, mood, posture and smile, says Professor Duan.

The second missing article is entitled "Shilun Dunhuang bihuade chuanshen yishu" (A Tentative Study of the Art of Delineating the Lively Mood in the Dunhuang Murals). This is indeed an aspect of Dunhuang art about which Professor Duan has accumulated unique experiences and penetrating insight --- a topic he will inevitably touch upon in any discourse, as the readers will find out for themselves in this volume. The Chinese word is "chuanshen", which literally means the "transmission of the spirit, the mood, character etc." of the figure by the painter. According to Professor Duan, "chuanshen" has been the highest aesthetic ideal in Chinese art. An ancient philosopher Xunze observed that whenever a figure is painted or created by any other means, his/her spirit, mood and character should come to life.

According to Professor Duan delineating the mood in Dunhuang art made a breakthrough during the Tang dynasty. While earlier the spiritual outlook was uniformly expressed among the figures of an identical category (the Buddhas have a uniformly characteristic mood and Bodhisattvas theirs), the Tang artists began to create the specific mood of every individual. Professor Duan feels that characterization is a combination of the subjective sentiments of the artist and his intellectual assessment of the character he is creating. The Tang technique combined both the realistic and the romantic approach.

The third article entitled "Daojiao tcai shi ruhe jinru fojiao shikude" (How did Taoist Themes get into a Buddhist Cave) is a specific study of the paintings on the ceiling of Cave No. 249. As mentioned earlier,

this is one of the most controversial caves at Mogao. Professor Duan is one of the first scholars to take a firm view that the controversial ceiling is dominated by Taoist themes and this article is intended to put the controversy at rest. The arguments are supported by literary sources. However, there are more questions raised than answered by this article.

There are two more articles discussing the costumes depicted in the Dunhuang paintings: one, a general survey and the other specifically on costumes reflected from the paintings of Tang dynasty. Both these articles would be of great interest to those studying the historical evolution of costume in China. However, this writer often feels that Chinese scholars who are engaged in the study of Dunhuang art must familiarize themselves with Indian costumes both of the past and the present. In the absence of this familiarity many mistaken descriptions may have occurred among the Chinese commentaries on Dunhuang paintings. For instance, no Chinese commentator so far has a detailed knowledge of a *sari* or a *dhoti* and how they are worn. Without such elementary knowledge it is hardly possible to describe the attire of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at Dunhuang with accuracy. Even more disturbing is the fact that Chinese scholars have every facility to come to India to make detailed observations. One instance of a glaring historical mistake is the ancients' depiction of Buddha wearing the "baizhequn" (skirt with a hundred folds) in Chinese literature. I remember a seminar at Mogao when I could not convince a Chinese participant during the discussions that what was worn by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas was *adhoti*, not a skirt. In our translation of Professor Duan's articles, we have taken the liberty of translating his word "qun" (skirt) into "dhoti".

Now, I shall briefly comment on the essays of Professor Duan which we have included in this volume. The vastness, richness and the complicated diversity of Dunhuang murals can bewilder any first-time visitor, be he/she an expert or a novice. I remember once I was inside a Mogao cave discussing things with a Dunhuang researcher, there trooped in a big group of Australian elders mostly women. The leader and guide of the group was the first secretary in the cultural section of the Australian Embassy in Beijing. He was obviously an "Old China Hand" who could read and speak Chinese well. First, he thought it was a Tang cave. On reading the Chinese language introductions inside the cave he quickly corrected himself, and reminded his audience that it was a Sui cave, earlier than Tang. He definitely commanded respect of his flock who exclaimed: "Marvellous", "Marvellous", "Gorgeous", "Gorgeous", whenever he paused to allow such appreciations. I cannot recall the details of his speech, but certainly remember that he reiterated the influence of Taoism on the paintings, repeating: "naturalism", "naturalism", "a lot of space" etc. What struck me most as a bystander of his eloquent performance was that throughout he did not mention "Buddhism" even once. And he concluded his lecture and guided tour by recommending a Penguin booklet on China for further reading --- a book which probably has no reference to Dunhuang. After this interlude, I resumed my conversation with the Dunhuang scholar, and both of us wondered what understanding the elderly Australian tourists could have gained about Dunhuang art.

That was many, many years back before metal gates were fitted to every Mogao cave, and there certainly was a lot of light inside the caves, particularly before noon. Today, anyone who visits Dunhuang caves, is unable to see anything without torch light. And the torch light can cover very limited spot. I mention all this to emphasize that one must first do some homework before entering the Mogao caves, if one wishes to gain knowledge and insight from the tour. Particularly the motivated and the scholarly must first have a short course of orientation before making a trip to Dunhuang. I think the articles of Duan Wenjie in this book provide an excellent pre-trip course about Dunhuang art. What he tells is authoritative and authentic, is information and understanding from the reservoir. Even a trickle can benefit the uninitiated a good deal. This aspect alone, I think, determines that it is very worthwhile to give wide publicity to what Professor Duan has written about Dunhuang art, and to recommend to all those who are interested in Dunhuang art to read his writings as a primer.

The great strength of Professor Duan's article, which is also the great strength of the entire work of the Dunhuang Academy under the leadership of Professor Duan, lies in the enormous studies of the Chinese



translations of the Buddhist scriptures according to the details of the Dunhuang paintings. Almost every important painting has been related to one or more than one Chinese texts to identify the figures and understand the details. Naturally, not every detail can be satisfactorily interpreted by the Buddhist scriptures. Professor Duan and his colleagues in Dunhuang Academy then retreat to the second line to consult Chinese written records of native or Taoist legends to find a solution. This appears to be a perfect academic exercise. However, from the Indian cultural viewpoint there are obviously elements in Dunhuang art which are drawn from non-Buddhist traditions. Though I am far from an expert in this field, I seem to have seen Hindu gods in many places. Obviously, the weak link in the study of the Dunhuang Academy lies in this aspect. An input by Indian experts will be greatly helpful. We must realize that what is in Dunhuang art is a wealth of Indian and Chinese traditions interwoven into an intricate tapestry. Professor Duan and his colleagues have already done the spadework, but have not exhausted all the fields. A true edifice of studies of Dunhuang art has to depend upon a giant endeavour of experts of the two countries, and even with a helping hand from the experts of cultures other than India and China.

Here, I should not fail to mention that due to the massive translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and the originals being lost in India, and due to ancient India's want of a strong written tradition (everything was passed down by oral teaching) China has preserved more Indian Mahāyāna teachings than India --- the motherland of these teachings. So also, many ancient Indian legends and stories which can be found in Chinese literature are little known to modern India. We know that the original aim of the Dunhuang frescoes was known as "bianxiang", i.e., to transform the teachings of the scriptures into pictures. Thus in the Mogao paintings there is a rich reservoir of ancient Indian legends and stories which may have escaped the memory of modern India. Professor Duan's immense efforts in interpreting the details of the Dunhuang paintings at Mogao, Yulin and other sites through the translated literature are a great contribution to the restoration of the ancient Buddhist Indian mythology. The only question remaining is whether Professor Duan and his colleagues would need the help of the Indian experts in this endeavour. I think the modern Indian intellectuals should feel grateful for what Professor Duan has done, and would be ready to assist him in further exploring the upper stream of Indian culture which looks rather distant with a blurred impression from 20th century India.

I have a moment ago recaptured the scene of some Australian tourists' visit to the Mogao caves. I think it is a universal problem, not only for foreigners, but also for Chinese today to receive the true message so painstakingly and colourfully presented by the Dunhuang artists of yore. The message is of a vast dimension and intricate contents which is quite beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated, let alone those who have not gotten prepared to receive it as personified by the example of the Australian diplomat. It is interesting to note that though Professor Duan has no real intention to get to the depth of the message per se, he has brought his readers a step nearer to it. I feel that his writings carried by this volume have revealed before us the ancients' desire of creating a celestial paradise of compassion and tranquillity in the terrestrial cavity, to turn the dark corner of earth into a bright new world. This, indeed, is the fundamental truth about the cave art. What I am saying is to complement Professor Duan for bringing out the noble mission of cave art. Art is never for art's sake. It caters to the urgent need and strong aspiration of social life. It is based on this logic so powerfully conveyed by Duan Wenjie's writings that we salute the creators of Ajanta, Dunhuang and other monuments of cave art in the world for a very noble cause, for kindling the light of wisdom, love, peace and selflessness in the serene locations of mankind.

Among the Mogao caves, those created before Tang constitute a very difficult area for modern scholarly investigation. Professor Duan's article dealing with the period and his interventions in the Delhi seminar have shown that enormous research has been done by him and his colleagues about this early phase of Dunhuang art. But, it was only after we got down to translate the article that we realized the dimensions and depth of his research. In the section about the Dunhuang depiction of the Buddhist stories, Duan vividly narrated twelve examples with such details that have even escaped the knowledge of many Indian experts. Although the details are depicted on the walls, but the identity of the heroes involved in the stories has to be dug up from a pile of written sources --- that is precisely what Professor Duan has done.

We sometimes feel a little ashamed that not all the names of Indian places and personages in Duan's article can be rendered in their original Sanskrit forms with absolute certainty. In this article, Professor Duan has also furnished a good introduction of the early Chinese political, social, cultural and art development to provide a clear understanding of the birth of Dunhuang art. This will be of great help for foreign scholars to delve into the new subject of Dunhuang art. I think Professor Duan has made an impeccable point which all the scholars interested in Dunhuang art should bear in mind, viz., Dunhuang was from the very beginning the confluence of cultures, art, traditions and influences of foreign lands and also interior China --- the political and cultural centres of the country.

The two articles on Dunhuang during the Tang dynasty are complemented by many other articles and references written by Professor Duan and published elsewhere which we cannot include in this volume. It seems to me that the Tang period is Duan's pet subject and he is a thorough master of the Tang culture and art. I think the writings of Professor Duan on Dunhuang art during the Tang period are among the best modern Chinese studies of Tang culture and art. This compliment is due to Prof. Duan's immense scholarship. It also reflects the importance of Dunhuang in the entire gamut of Tang culture and art. Duan has made an important point that because of fierce strife for imperial patronage between Buddhism and Taoism that an all-out effort on the part of the Buddhists to make their presence felt contributed to the prosperity of Dunhuang art during the Tang Dynasty. Equally valid is his point about the contribution of Empress Wu. I submit humbly that because of the prolonged prejudice against this female statesman by China's male chauvinist tradition Empress Wu's great contribution to Tang art and culture has remained underestimated. I sincerely wish that more scholarly efforts will be devoted to the making of amends in this regard. I suspect that many puzzles in Chinese Buddhist art, such as the changing of sex of the image of Avalokiteśvara from that of a male (in India) into that of a female (in China), cannot be solved without a full appreciation and true understanding of Empress Wu's great contributions.

The article on the last phase of Dunhuang art is equally authoritative supported by elaborate research although the period marked the decline of Dunhuang art treasure. Prof. Duan has done well to highlight the Tantric influence on the art of this period which was a contribution from Tibetan culture. Equally highlighted in the article is the fruitful interaction between the cultures of various nationalities.

There is a little overlapping between the first article "Style and Artistry of Dunhuang Art" and the first article in the Appendix "Salient Features of Dunhuang Art". Thus we have included the latter in the volume because it is an excellent overview of Dunhuang art. Our readers should know that all the articles written by Prof. Duan are solicited. He wrote them on different dates as the authority and custodian of Dunhuang art eager to give a comprehensive picture of Dunhuang. This gives rise to the possibility of repetitions which are unavoidable. I think a little of this can help our readers to gain a deeper impression about the aspects being repeated while I ask for pardon from them as we do not have the author's permission to edit his articles.

I have had the privilege to know and interact with Professor Duan for the past ten years and I find him refreshingly open to new ideas and views. At the end of his first-ever month-long visit to India in 1991, Professor Duan went back to China with a strong sense that he had known too little of the great civilization and art tradition of India, and that he would have to make up this deficiency in future as India formed such an integral component in the study of Dunhuang art. Indeed, in the articles included in this volume India has been repeatedly referred to. It is likely that Professor Duan has already acquired a lot of new information and fresh perspectives to look at the problems concerning India's influence on Dunhuang art.

Bringing out this volume, as I have said earlier, is part of a larger design or movement, to bring the two great civilizations of India and China face to face, and initiate direct interaction without the mediation of a third cultural bias. As we are just at the beginning of this venture, and as the articles of Professor Duan which we have selected were written much before this beginning, we anticipate a long series of

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discussions and debates to bring about a greater mutual understanding between the proponents of the culture of the two countries. I am sure that the English language readers, particularly the Indian academia and intellectual community to whom this volume is dedicated, will find the following pages worth reading and thought-provoking.

## Style and Artistry of Dunhuang Art



The Murals of Dunhuang Caves are rated among the rare treasures of the world not only for their enormous quantity, but also for their scale and richness of content and the consummate artistry with which they have been executed. Undoubtedly, they comprise China's great treasure house of ancient art. The murals may be broadly divided into seven categories:

1. Paintings of Buddha;
2. Buddhist tales;
3. Traditional mythological themes;
4. Illustrations of the sūtras;
5. Decorative patterns;
6. Paintings of Buddhist historical events and of auspicious signs and lessons on discipline; and
7. Portraits of donors.

Interior of Cave No. 288, Western Wei

Changes in Buddhist thought at various points of history have dictated the different characteristics of the caves, the selection of themes for the murals and the overall layout of the caves. However, it is possible to put together a holistic picture of most of the caves. In general, they have decorated ceilings in chessboard or skyboard pattern and have painted stucco figures of deities on the altars and in the niches. The walls on the four sides are covered by murals of varied themes and the floor with lotus patterns. One enters the caves and senses a mysterious atmosphere far removed from our mundane world and is at once fascinated and overwhelmed by the splendour and magnificence of the murals and stucco images/dunhuang. It is not only the overall effect of the combination of architecture, stucco images/dunhuang and murals, but, more importantly, the distinctive Chinese styles which have wrought the powerful and everlasting enchantment of the Dunhuang murals.

A national style develops only through the long history of its indigenous arts. The Dunhuang murals are no exception. They were created under the influence of the ideas and ideals as well as aesthetic temperament of China through art, language and expression of the national painting. It is the characteristic beauty of a national art which makes the murals attractive. However, the national style never remains constant; rather, it develops and changes along with the changing times. It always comes alive in the style of both an individual painter or a school of art specific to a period as well as in a particularly indigenous flavour.

The Dunhuang murals have passed through ten periods beginning from the Sixteen Kingdoms through the Northern Wei, Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui Dynasty, Tang Dynasty, Five Dynasties, Song Dynasty and Western Xia up to the Yuan Dynasty. They can be broadly divided into three stages of beginning, climax and decline. However, in every period, whatever its duration, Dunhuang art bears the distinct imprint of its own times, and is clearly distinguishable from one period to another.

Dunhuang art was in its formative stage during the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms. There was Chinese

culture and art grown under the influence of Taoism and Confucianism during the Han and Jin Dynasties as exemplified in the tomb murals of the Wei and Jin Dynasties (in the Hexi corridor). They provided the indigenous foundation for receiving the Buddhist ideology and accepting the already well-shaped Buddhist art from the Western Regions which was spreading steadily eastward along the "Silk Road". All this inevitably exercised a decisive influence on the art of Dunhuang.



The earliest of the handful of extant murals, painted in the Northern Liang during the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms, have as their central themes Buddha's life stories, Jātaka tales as well as illustrations of Buddha preaching Dharma. Most of the figures are shown wearing flower garlands or jewel-studded crowns, curly hair falling over their shoulders. They have oval faces, sharp noses, large eyes, long and pendant earlobes and a sturdy physique. The upper torso is partly bare, their chests adorned with necklace, a broad shawl draped over the shoulders, and a long dhoti girdling the loins. The Bodhisattvas and secular kings are all in the costume of Western Regions. Women of the laity wear Kuca dresses.

Cave No. 272, Northern Liang

The background is of ochre-red on which appear simple and uninhibited colours. The technique of the three-dimensional method was adapted to achieve the light-and-shade effect of the faces. It was known as the "traditional method of Heavenly India" (*Tianzhu yifa*). Vermilion-red was always used for the contours of the face and the eye socket. These red circles formed by repeated application have now turned black. The eye and the bridge of the nose were painted with white powder. The colouring technique was to bring out the three-dimensional effect of the face and limbs of the figures. The figures were first sketched out in ochre; once the colouring was complete, vigorous and fine black lines were applied to finalize the contours.

The countenance, postures and the mood of the figures match with the milieu of the painting to produce an atmosphere of solemn and tranquil mystery. This is related closely to the religious practice of meditation prevalent in north China which endeavours to keep the mind away from the cares of the mundane world. This plain and solemn style followed the technique of the tomb murals of the Wei and Jin Dynasties in the Hexi region. The only departure from the tomb murals lies in the mood and the style which bear a marked influence of the Western Regions.

The murals of the Northern Wei were richer in content than those preceding them. The predominant theme was still the Buddhist stories which, in addition to Buddha's life stories and Jātaka tales, also had a new content of illustrations highlighting the working of *karma*.

Gradually the images/dunhuang got taller and the proportions between head and body became 1:6, 1:7 or even more disparate, so that some of the figures had legs twice as long as the torso. A new look was introduced by these slender figures with long limbs who were represented in lively movements. Even more evident was the change in the facial expressions: the earlier oval faces were being replaced by longish and leaner ones closely resembling those of the figures in the tomb murals of Dunhuang and Jiayuguan area of Wei and Jin vintage. They also belonged to the model of Gu Kaizhi's paintings as may be seen in the facial contours of the figures in his painting of "Female Historians". Here is an instance of a synthesis between Buddhist image-creation and the indigenous art tradition.



Cave No. 254, Northern Wei

The composition of paintings improved greatly. The details of the Buddhist stories which were set in different times and at different places have been cleverly integrated on the canvas with background scenes of mountains, forests and animals that create a sense of space, making room for the Buddhist figures who are foregrounded. This method of composition capable of accommodating different historical events on the same canvas which had already gained currency during the Han Dynasty advanced a step further during the Northern Wei. More important is the emergence of figures clad in dark, long gowns of Chinese style in the comic-strip pattern of story paintings arranged horizontally, indicating the steady trend of Sinicization in Buddhist mural paintings, both in content and form.

The line drawings of the Northern Wei demonstrate greater maturity in skill and smoothness like "enchanted clouds and flowing water". The colouring also shows enrichment. The Western three-dimensional colouring technique has undergone innovation, making the facial features more rounded and the figures more realistic. Against the background of ochre-red the figures appear more magnificent and earnest.

After Yuan Rong, the king of Dongyang, assumed governorship of Guazhou in 524, the paintings begin to acquire the style of the Chinese "heartland". This was due to the changes in the political system initiated by Emperor Xiaowen of Wei Dynasty introducing the ideology and art of south China to the north, which, in turn, created a tremendous impact on the cave art of north China.

In terms of content, the change brought traditional Chinese mythology into Buddhist stories. The images/dunhuang of the Bodhisattva became slender and tall, with thin faces, distinct eyes and thin eyebrows. They smile radiantly, exuding casual elegance. The majority wear long, dark gowns in Chinese style with a belt around the waist and shoes with a high front. The semi-naked figures covered by a shawl resemble the gentry of the Southern Dynasties. They are comparable in costume, countenance and style with the figures painted in "The seven sagacious men of the bamboo groves" (*Zhulin qixian tu*) discovered at the site of Xishan Bridge at Nanjing and those painted in the tomb murals of the Southern Dynasties unearthed in Danyang. As a whole, they embody the style of "well-shaped handsome faces" which was a vogue started by Dai Kui and Gu Kaizhi reaching maturity with Lu Tanwei. This style of Chinese "heartland" characterization was universally adopted in the caves of the last years of the Northern Wei and Western Wei and Northern Zhou. They show a distinct departure from the figures of the early years of the Northern Wei which are under the influence of the styles of the Western Regions.



Xiwangmu (Wife of Indra), Cave No. 296, Northern Zhou

The introduction of traditional Chinese mythological themes has created in the Mogao murals a vivid portrayal of flying figures and floating clouds of paintings bursting with dynamism. These new themes also call for a new technology of the swift drawing of ochre-red outlines and light-black contour lines. The iron-hard lines finalizing the contours show elegance, vigour and freedom of expression. The ochre background was gradually replaced by white which stands in clear contrast to the intermingling of vermilion, violet, blue and green. A special feature is the introduction of the traditional Chinese colouring technique of the "heartland" in the murals. Two red patches are painted on the cheeks of the figures to demonstrate health and vitality, contributing also to a three-dimensional effect. This is a different approach producing an effect quite opposite to that of the three-dimensional method introduced from the Western Regions during the Northern Liang and Northern Wei. Both these techniques of colouring existed side by side for a fairly long period of sixty to seventy years.

During the Northern Zhou, Yu Yi, the Duke of Jianping, succeeded Yuan Rong as provincial Governor of Guazhou. The two did their utmost in popularizing Buddhism in Dunhuang; a reference to which may be found in "Li jun xiu Mogaoku fokan bei" (Inscription of Mr. Li's exploits in building Buddhist shrines at Mogao).

Although the political power of the Northern Zhou was brief, quite a number of caves were cut during this period while story paintings reached new heights. The stories have rich and complex plots, compact compositions and free and invigorating line drawings of muscular figures. The refreshing colours add to the concentrated flavour of life evident in the paintings.

The figures, costume and decoration betray the influence of the "heartland" style. In the representation of character, the style of "heartland" China blended well with earlier styles of Western Regions creating new images/dunhuang of "rounded and handsome faces", to be seen in the example of the figures of the laity and donors in the illustrations of stories. The most striking feature of the Northern Zhou is the sudden appearance of figures of Buddhist themes in Western style. The Bodhisattvas have plump faces and short and sturdy bodies either with a semi-nude upper torso or wearing a *kaṣāya*, a dhoti around the loins and a broad shawl draped over the shoulders. Particularly deserving of notice is the colouring of the faces --- white nose, white eyes or white strips extending from the eyes to the eyebrows, white teeth and white chin. Thick white powder is also used to highlight the cheeks, the forehead and the flat belly, making the figure look fat. This was a new feature, not to be found in the early cave murals of Mogao, Tianti Hill and Binglingsi. The style may be traced back to the Kuca cave murals; in colour and characterization it is

identical to the style found in Kizil caves. As the style of the early murals of Kuca appeared in the Dunhuang caves during the last years of the Northern Dynasties, scholars have for many years mistakenly believed these Northern Zhou caves to be ones from the Northern Wei.

There is a specific reason as to why the old forms made a reappearance. It was primarily due to the close ties between the Zhou Emperor Wu and the foreign nationalities in the western and northern neighbourhood of the country. After his marriage to the Turkish princess, Ashina, there was an inflow of music, dance and arts from the Western Regions into "heartland" China through the Hexi Corridor. A parallel stream of culture and artefacts, particularly exquisite silks, flowed from China to the Western Regions. Such brisk cultural and economic interchange coincided with Duke Jian Ping's vigorous patronage of the construction of caves in Dunhuang. Therefore, it is but natural that the style of early Kizil murals should once again spread to Dunhuang. However, this style proved as ephemeral as the political fate of the Northern Zhou which lasted only for a brief span of ten odd years.

The Sui Dynasty ended the confrontation between the North and South China. The royal Sui patronised the construction of Buddhist shrines at Dunhuang. As a result, about 70 odd caves were cut out at Mogao within a short span of about 30 years. Illustrations of Hinayana Buddhist sūtras from the west were gradually replaced by those of Mahāyāna Buddhism imported from "heartland" China. The Buddhist figures gradually took on the uniform style of the Sui Dynasty after initial bold experiments.



The disproportionately big-head-and-short-leg characteristics of the Northern Zhou were gradually eliminated by the end of Sui. Characterization became rich and varied: the Bodhisattvas show a range of faces --- square or narrow; some have wide foreheads and beautifully-shaped chins, while the Arhats have flat or round heads. In addition, there is a category of Chinese images/dunhuang distinct from their Indian counterparts. The postures of the Bodhisattvas also underwent a gradual transformation: instead of a stiff standing pose we have one leg bent in a relaxed manner while the other supports the weight of the body, thus giving a natural tilt to the posture. This graceful posture is a development from the earlier imaginative and exaggerated approach to a more realistic one.

Chapter on the Universal Gate from Saddharma-pundarika-sutra, Cave No. 420, Sui Dynasty.

Most Bodhisattvas of the Sui Dynasty have their right shoulder uncovered, they wear a monk's robe and a silk dhoti wrapped around the waist. The dhoti is woven with a phoenix and floral pattern of Persian origin. Thus a special kind of Bodhisattva characterizes the Sui Dynasty, clearly an effect of the Sui Dynasty's expanding activities along the Silk Road, following the Sui government's hosting of a trade fair with twenty-seven nations as participants at Zhangye, and their vigorous policy of promoting cultural exchanges between China and the West.

Meanwhile, line drawings too underwent a change. Amidst the fine iron-hard lines there emerged free and swiftly flowing orchid-leaf lines. Ochre-red lines were used not only for the initial sketch but also for finalizing the contours, adding colour to the figures. Colouring evolved from the simple application to a more resplendent effect as the western three-dimensional method blended with the Chinese colouring technique. The tonal effect of the faces appears rosy but with a highlighting of light and shade. Foreign



techniques combined with indigenous skills provided the basis for a new style.

The unifying painting style of the Sui had two streams. The first had gradually evolved since the Northern Zhou, where the figures were painted in a succinct and precise manner. As they say,

"The brush moves once or twice with style  
And there appears a figure meanwhile."

This style is distinguished by refined line drawings and simple and light colouring. The figures created are solemn and tranquil with a quality of elegant ease. This is the "shuti" (sparse style) described by Zhang Yanyuan as one with "simple strokes, a light mood and an elegant finish". From the Kaihuang Era (581-600) to the Daye Era (605-617) this style prevailed as a distinct feature of the Sui Dynasty murals.

The second stream provides the figures with an environment for activities. The paintings with spaces occupied by halls, pavilions, courtyards, mountains, flowing brooks, trees, animals and so on are all drawn with minute and realistic details. The colouring is magnificent with multi-layered applications leading to a thick and heavy tonal effect. Zhang Yanyuan called this "detailed, exquisite and extremely beautiful" dense style (*miti*). This was exactly the same style as that of the famous contemporary painters, like Zhan Ziqian, Zheng Fashi and others of their school. However, both the sparse and the dense styles bore influences from heartland China. The two streams merged into one in the early years of the Tang Dynasty and formed the basis for the development of the Tang murals.



Bodhisattva, Cave No. 328, High Tang

The unification of China under the Tang Dynasty brought with it an unprecedented development of Dunhuang mural art. With the changes in the history of the Hexi corridor, we can divide the murals executed during the three hundred years of the Tang Dynasty into those from the early half and others from the latter half of the dynasty. The early half comprises the initial period of the Tang Dynasty, up to the time when Tibet occupied Hexi. The subsequent period up to the downfall of the dynasty constitutes the latter half.

The first half of Tang marked the rising power and prosperity of the ruling Li family. Dunhuang murals of the period also demonstrated vitality and liveliness. The figures were proportionate, radiating health and maturity. Some of the Bodhisattvas have square foreheads and broad cheeks while others have elongated, curved and well-developed figures. Their hair is tied up high in a knot and they wear jewelled headdresses. They have "faces of jade skin" and "long eyebrows extending to the temples". All the figures have a well-fed look and are plump and lustrous. Some Bodhisattvas are tall, slim and graceful while some others have soft and sinuous bodies which are wave-like, curving almost like the letter "S". During the Kaiyuan and Tianbao eras (713-755) there appeared yet another kind with "well-

developed and delicate figures" and "arched eyebrows and plummy cheeks" resembling the legendary Lady Yang --- the enchanting concubine of Emperor Xuanzong I. This model is most prominent among the paintings of the donors. The Bodhisattvas of the Tang Dynasty underwent further feminisation: despite the tadpole-shaped mustaches above their lips, they are no longer robust men in "heroic" postures. Such mustached feminine figures are typical of the Tang Bodhisattvas. The disciples of Buddha have also changed from figures of Indian monks to those of Chinese ones. Their facial features, postures, costumes and expressions reveal a mature and expressive portrayal of differences in their age, experience and character.

Continuous innovations may be seen in the composition of the paintings, marking a departure from the earlier scenario of "human figures bigger than mountains" or "water carrying no boat". The introduction of the bird's-eye view perspective had opened up a new possibility of creating giant illustrations of the Buddhist sūtras on a gigantic scale.

By this time the orchid-leaf line has already been invented. Lines such as the draft lines, final lines and lines used for highlighting the mood of the figures show power and vividness with suitable variations to depict different figures. Care is given to the relationship between the main and secondary lines, sparse and dense lines and thick and thin lines, expressing a rise and fall in the rhythm of line drawing. To this is added a new technique of resplendent and dazzling colouring which gives the painting a three-dimensional effect and the Bodhisattvas, Devarajas, and Buddha disciples all stand out as plummy and real figures.

Greater skill and refinement in aesthetic language, i.e., in the line and the colouring, in the characterization of the Buddhist figures, break away from earlier stereotypes and serve to demonstrate most effectively the "magical power" of the stories. The continuous attempt to unearth the inner moods and feelings of the figures has turned into detailed focus on various postures of walking, resting, sitting, sleeping, actions and speech, and on the facial features, eye expressions, on mutual relations between people, relations between the figures and their environment and relations between partial plot and main figures and so on. By means of such close attention to interrelationships, the features and expressions of the figures are revealed. This has produced a large number of figures with high artistic value and established the realistic style with Chinese characteristics.

The murals of the latter half of the Tang Dynasty declined in quality after the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang in 755. The occupation also marked the end of the hitherto flourishing Kaiyuan Era and the deterioration of the Tang political situation. Although the period of Tibetan occupation saw the birth of several outstanding works of art which could compete with those of High Tang, the general trend was downhill. In the characterization of the images/dunhuang of the period we see a mastery of the "technique of highlighting the bones", manifesting the organic harmony between bone and flesh. Most of the deities have a face which is a happy medium between the skinny and the overly plump. The Bodhisattvas are no longer shown in twisted figures. They now stand with straight legs and with waist slightly twisted. The total effect is natural and harmonious. There is a set pattern in the composition of the illustrations of the sūtras. The use of lines shows great improvement. The orchid-leaf lines used in drawing out the contours are thick and forceful, or alternatively thin and pliant, with judicious variations to highlight the objects of depiction. Ochre-red lines used to finalize the contours are also characteristic of this period.

Colouring during the Tibetan occupation is not as rich as that of the earlier period. There are basically two kinds of colour schemes to be found representing different moods. In one scheme, blue and green are the primary colours used on a white background. The effect is one of freshness of tone and elegance. In the other scheme, the background is ochre-red and the primary colours are vermilion and brown, creating an earnest and warm mood. The most exquisite specimens in characterization confirm the descriptions "qiongqing xiewu" (sketching objects with utmost emotions) and "dong bi yi zhen" (drawing according to reality). The figures therefore show "Jin huai kuangda" (broadmindedness) and "Shensi feiyang" (the

mind in a flyaway mood), all of which are typical of the style of the period of Tibetan occupation.

During the period of Zhang Yichao the Chinese political recovery failed to bring back prosperity of art in Dunhuang. Characterization of the deities is a copy of the earlier Tibetan style, except that the faces are flatter and plumper. In general, there is precision in figure painting, but the figures lack vividness. The compositions are large in scale and somewhat disorderly, often lapsing into stereotypes. The line drawings excel in laborious neatness but are otherwise quite prosaic. However, the donors who appear in miniature scenes of daily life with "magnificent characters clad in silk" are vividly painted, betraying the influence of the school of Zhang Xuan and Zhen Fang in the representation of the gentry and their ladies in the style of the latter Tang murals.

During the period of the Five Dynasties and the beginning of the Song Dynasty, the Cao family which ruled over Guazhou and Shazhou had their own art academy similar to those in heartland China. The Academy took the lead in unifying the different painting styles. And this unified style was virtually a copy of the Late Tang in content, characterization, composition, linedrawing and colouring. Uniformity was achieved at the cost of individuality. Be it Buddha, Bodhisattva or the laity, the figures all fell into stereotyped patterns. Although the bold and free orchid-leaf lines were used, they lacked refinement. In colouring, however, a certain uniqueness is achieved. Facial features and costumes were coloured at one time, creating a magnificence and warmth characteristic of the style of the Art Academy. Meanwhile the treatment of the figures vis-a-vis their environment and the treatment of painted objects vis-a-vis the space of the canvas gradually achieved a degree of realism. Although the style of the painting is not disciplined, it has a casual elegance.

The Western Xia ruled over Dunhuang for nearly 200 years. The Mogao murals produced during this period are poor in variety but not in their style which is the combination of three streams. The first stream has inherited the tradition of the Northern Song, with stereotyped characterization. The eye sockets are coloured with two ochre-red lines and the faces have a bitter smile. The compositions fall into fixed patterns. The magnificence of the illustration of "Sukhāvati" has totally disappeared. Lacklustre colouring, mostly with a green background, and the blend of colours create an impression of monotony and coldness. The green background is the outstanding feature of the murals of the Western Xia.

The second stream is characterized by strong and corpulent body, a long and plump face, straight nose, small mouth, and almost vertical eyes and eyebrows which resemble those which we see from Basilik in the West, during the Uighur Gaochang period. In line drawing we find the use of twisted-reed lines, forceful and angular, inherited from the school of Liang Kai, Li Gonglin and others from heartland China. This shows that the Western Xia continued to be under the influence from both East and West like the earlier periods.

Yet another stream is formed by further development of the above style, with dense and forceful linedrawing, simple and light colouring, preserving the traces of Wu Daozi's style of a light touch of colour amidst heavy black ink strokes. What is wanting is vividness. The style bears resemblance to that of wood carving in Western Xia with its rich, decorative quality.

Various styles of Tantrism were prevalent in China of the Yuan dynasty. One kind was Tibetan Tantric art characterized by well-proportioned figures with square faces, broad foreheads, well-shaped chins, long eyebrows, large eyes and graceful postures. Faces are painted in blue or green or a combination of red and green for light and shade effects. The paintings give an impression of sharp contrasts, of terror and gloom. This form of Tantric art was directly influenced by India and Nepal.

Another kind is derived from the tantric religious paintings of the Tang Dynasty. Most of the figures resemble government officials and nobility of heartland China. Celestial ladies and *devarājas* don the

imperial attires and ceremonial dresses of China. The line drawing is rich in variety, using elegant and forceful iron-hard lines for the facial and body contours of Bodhisattvas, twisted-reed lines for the thick and heavy folds in the draperies while employing distinct strokes such as broad-top and thin-end lines for depicting the warriors' strong muscles, and light-weighted gossamer line for fluffy beard and hair. Thus we see various lines in full play in their various functions in characterization and in expressing different qualities. Their realistic appearance has helped bring out their deep inner feelings as well. This kind of pure and elegant style makes up outstanding work of art during the period of general decline in Dunhuang murals.

The murals of Dunhuang are painted to propound Buddhist doctrines and tenets. Art is used as a medium to interact with people. Buddhist art has developed through the appreciation and criticism of the viewers, competitions among the painters and the rivalry among various schools. Staging painting competitions among Buddhist temples was in vogue from Sui and from Tang onwards. During Late Tang there was a contest between two exponents of mural art Chen Gao and Peng Jian at Jingtuo Monastery in Chengdu, the rules of the contest being, "each paints one wall screened by a curtain without showing his work to the other; on completion their merits are judged." On the day of completion, the curtains were removed before the public who witnessed "a match in the vigour of brushes; the viewers fail to name the winner."<sup>1</sup> During the Five Dynasties, three mural painters, Zhang Tu, Ba Yi and Arhan Li, staged a similar painting competition. Zhang Tu with his skilled technique, "wielding his brush and living up to his fame", created life-like figures and defeated Ba Yi. Later, Ba Yi improved his skill by hard practice and created Buddhist guardian angels with "magnificent colours" and "subtle expressions" to defeat Arhan Li who hanged himself after the humiliating defeat. It is quite clear therefore that the competition was fierce and that excellence in art was the main criterion. Without art people would not be attracted and inspired, the purpose of propagating Buddhism would not be achieved. Popularity of Buddhism for posterity would not become possible.

That Dunhuang murals are still dazzling people's eyes and arousing popular feelings today mainly because of their many-faceted artistic achievements and aesthetic quality displaying a national characteristic.

Let us now discuss the various aspects of Dunhuang murals and their artistic achievements. We begin with the characteristics of facial depictions, costumes and colouring of deities and the laity and their evolution at different periods.

<b>Dynasty</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Face</b>	<b>Costume</b>	<b>Colouring</b>
<b>Northern Liang</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western three-dimensional</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western three-dimensional</i>
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Northern foreign</i>	<i>Western three-dimensional</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Plain</i>
<b>Northern Wei</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>

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	<i>Donors</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland plain</i>
<b>Western Wei</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>South Chinese</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland (Red face)</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>	<i>South Chinese</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Donors</i>	<i>South Chinese</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
<b>Northern Zhou</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Western &amp; Heartland Western</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>New Western</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western (White)</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Mixed Chinese and Foreign</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese and Foreign</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Northern Foreign</i>	<i>Northern B</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
<b>Sui</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Sinicized Western</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese, Western &amp; Heartland</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Donors</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
<b>First Half of Tang</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Sinicized Western</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese &amp; Western</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Donors</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland</i>

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<b>Latter Half of Tang</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Sinicized Western</i>	<i>Heartland plain &amp; Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category C:</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Western &amp; Mixed Chinese and Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Foreign</i>	<i>Heartland plain &amp; Heartland colouring</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Heartland colouring</i>
<b>Five Dynasties and Early Song</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Sinicized Western &amp; Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland plain &amp; Heartland colouring and Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Characters in Buddhist stories</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Western</i>		
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Mixed Han and Muslim</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Uighur</i>	<i>Uighur</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
<b>Western Xia</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Sinicized Western</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Gaochang (Qoco)</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Heartland plain &amp; Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland colouring</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Tangut</i>	<i>Western Xia</i>	<i>Heartland</i>

<b>Yuan Dynasty</b>	<i>Bodhisattvas</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland &amp; Sinicized Western</i>	<i>Heartland</i>
	<i>Category B:</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Combination of Chinese and Western</i>
	<i>Donors</i>			
	<i>Category A:</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland</i>	<i>Heartland plain</i>
	<i>Category B;</i>	<i>Mongolian</i>	<i>Mongolian</i>	<i>Heartland</i>

It is clear from the above tables that the Dunhuang murals were exposed to influences of foreign Buddhist art in different measure at various points in history. However, there was a process of continuous Sinicization absorbing the paintings into a system of Chinese Buddhist art and manifesting the national characteristics of this art. The artistic achievement of Dunhuang murals may be summarised below.



Cave No.57, Early Tang

### Characterization and Metamorphosis

Dunhuang murals have two categories of characters, one of the deities (Buddha, Bodhisattvas and others) and the other of the laity (donors and characters in Buddhist stories). Both the categories draw images/dunhuang from real life but each has a different nature. In characterization, the figures of the laity abound in liveliness and are more representative of their respective periods. The deities, however, show very few changes and exhibit more elements of imagination and exaggeration. The laity usually have Chinese attire of the Heartland, while the deities are mostly clad in dresses of foreign countries. The laity are mostly painted with the Heartland technique of colouring while the deities are portrayed in the Western three-dimensional technique. Different periods have variations in these combinations.

Closely related to characterization is the phenomenon of metamorphosis. Dunhuang paintings have inherited the traditional technique of adaptation. They skilfully recreated the forms of human figures, animals and plants. Owing to the changing aesthetic concepts in different periods, the method of adaptation and degree of metamorphosis also vary. During the early period there was a greater degree of freedom in changing the stereotypes with more imagination. The figures were characteristic of their respective roles. After Sui and Tang free modifications of the model figures were considerably reduced; the figures conveyed a greater sense of reality and faithful depiction.

In general there are two methods of adaptation. The first is by exaggeration, introducing logical changes into the model figures by way of elongation and broadening the relevant parts of them. As compared to their Western stereotypes, Bodhisattvas of the latter period of the Northern Wei and the whole duration of

the Western Wei have much longer legs, fingers and necks, and show a clearer view of the forehead and a wider gap between the eyes and eyebrows, the corners of the mouth going upwards in the shape of a petal. After the treatment they have become romantic and carefree with "elegant bones and handsome faces". Vajra warriors are treated with a horizontal exaggeration of their figures, and have acquired fatter trunks and limbs, shortened necks, round heads and large bellies, with sharp pointed eyebrows and bulging eyes to highlight their robust physique and superhuman strength. Both the Bodhisattvas and the Vajra warriors are the end products of exaggeration.

The Tang style resorts to a different technique based on a proportionate figure with certain exaggerated parts and details. For example, the Bodhisattvas' eyebrows reach the temples; the corners of the mouth are sunken deep; three layers of fat are added below the chin. The hands and feet are tender like those of a chubby infant. We see before us the image of a beautiful lady of the Tang Dynasty with a plump body, arched eyebrows and full cheeks, as if about to walk out of the walls. The Vajra warriors of Tang have augmented muscles and bones to highlight their strength and vigour. Rhythmic spherical shaped muscles are seen on their faces and bellies quite in defiance of all laws of physiology. The idea is to suggest the latent strength of the warrior. This exaggeration has brought into relief their true character with a certain decorative quality attached to them.



Warrior, Cave No. 112, Middle Tang

Another kind of transformation depends on imagination, association and fantasy. This method existed in the ancient murals of China: Fuxi and Nuwa of the early murals had a human upper half and a snake form below the waist, clearly a totemic picture of the prehistorical period. The figures have a circle on their chest and a three-foot bird or a toad painted inside the circle which later became the images/dunhuang of Chinese Sun and Moon Gods respectively. These figures gradually lost their original mythological identity and became guardian angels to protect the departing souls of the dead and escorting them to heaven. Another example is the Thunder God who is a warrior with a beast's head, a human body, bird's claws with feathers on the arms, and outstretched arms beating the drum. This form tallies with the description of Thunder God by the Han scholar, Wang Chong, in his book *Lun Heng* (On Balance). In this form there is a combination of the characteristics of a ferocious animal, a man of quick reflexes and a fly master, the bird. As Wang Chong pointed out, this was a "fabricated form", one which is not found in the real world.

### The Flying Figures





Flying Figure, Cave No. 322, Early Tang

The Gandharva is one of the eight categories of supernatural beings who protect Dharma. They are the celestial angels playing music and showering petals. They resemble neither the angels of the west who have long wings growing from their shoulders, nor the "Yuren" (winged angels) of China with feathers all over their bodies. The Dunhuang flying figures are a departure from the Indian Gandharvas who float with the support of coloured clouds. They are musicians and dancers flying with ease as if lifted by the scarf that unfurls in the azure sky. This is the crystallization of high imaginative powers.

Imagination and exaggeration are both means of transformation, used for creating ideal artistic forms. Exaggeration is indispensable for all kinds of art. As Wang Chong said, "Praise will not make anyone happy if his merits are not exaggerated; censuring someone will only please others if his demerits are exaggerated."<sup>2</sup> However, we should also observe Liu Xie's rule which advocated, "praise without superlatives and criticize without vilification."<sup>3</sup> Transformation therefore has to be rational; exaggeration can be based only on happenings of real life while imagination does not mean building castles in the air. Hearing and vision direct or indirect of the ancients and modern men graft on to the power of imagination and create those various extraordinary images/dunhuang that appear in the Dunhuang murals.

### Line Drawing and Colour



Cave No. 249, Western Wei

Lines and colours constitute the alphabet of the artistic language of China's traditional paintings and possess a great capacity for outlining contours and expressing features. Succinct ink strokes bring forth a figure with a distinct character and complex inner feelings. The Dunhuang murals inherited this tradition in its entirety and developed it further to cope with the need for creating new forms. The draft lines of the murals are uninhibited, free and powerful. A few ochre-red lines on the wall serve to bring to life a wild ox. Strong black ink lines create a lively scene of pigs running in the field, vying with each other for food. In a painting named "God of Mount Song Sending a Pillar", the characters and buildings have not been drafted with charcoal sticks, but improvised freely with a few careless brush strokes. Such a spontaneous drawing creates a glimpse of a heavenly mood.

The finalizing lines of the Dunhuang murals are drawn fairly carefully, showing a lot of discipline. The early iron-hard lines which were fine, smooth and vigorous were used for elegant and carefree figures such as the celestial deities and flying figures of Western Wei. Line drawing and characterization combine flawlessly like pieces of jade in such creations. The orchid-leaf lines prevalent in Tang were produced by manoeuvring the tip of the brush to create rounded, smooth, in-depth strokes and externally soft and internally hard strokes perfectly cut out for the portrayal of healthy, well-developed and lively figures.

From the Five Dynasties onwards as Buddhist art declined, line drawing also lost its vigour, so also the precision in characterization and emotional touch of the brush. During Western Xia, the twisted-reed lines showed vigour, especially in the edges and corners. There is perhaps a connection between the nature of the line and the fact that the people of Western Xia made brush out of the Mongolian gazelle's hair. Line drawing showed some new developments during the Yuan Dynasty. A variety of lines were used to portray the figures: fine and mellowed iron-hard lines to draw the faces and limbs of Bodhisattvas; broad-top and thin end lines to highlight the muscles of warriors; twisted-reed lines for thick folds of the clothes, and gossamer lines for unruly beard and hair. Thus, different lines produced different portraits, thereby

enhancing the authenticity of the figures.

Line drawings of the Dunhuang murals have broadly traversed a chronological course of evolution, of iron-hard lines, passing on to orchid-leaf lines and then on to twisted-reed lines. They are completely identical to the development of "heartland" line drawing, i.e., Gu Kaizhi's iron-hard line drawing followed by Wu Daozi's orchid-leaf line drawing further followed by Liang Kai's and Li Gonglin's twisted-reed line drawing. From this point of view, it can be said that the Dunhuang murals developed along with the development of paintings in heartland China.

Dunhuang murals not only inherited the traditional Chinese line drawing but developed it further. Besides the draft lines and final lines, were added lines specifically highlighting emotions as also decorative lines. Lines were composed not only of ochre-red and black ink, but also of white powder and vermilion. In this way, the Dunhuang cave murals became richer, heavier and more mystical than those we see from the tomb murals.

Colour is the most "audible" and popular medium of artistic language. The enchanting power of colour is expressed in Yao Zui's observation, "bright colours are the delight of viewer". The architecture, stucco and mural paintings of each Dunhuang cave form a harmonious blend of colours. The use of colour in each painting was dictated by the overall plan of the entire cave. After the initial draft, the distribution of colours was done according to the rules of proportion, symmetry, repetition, echo and unity in diversity. As a result of the ingenious craftsmanship of ancient painters, figures of different periods demonstrate the beauty of various colouring styles: the earnest, pure, thick and bright hues of the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms and the Northern Wei, the refreshing bright beauty of the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou, resplendence and magnificence of Sui and Tang, the warm and gay colours of the Five Dynasties and early Song, the cold tones of Western Xia, and the simple, light and leisurely pigments of Yuan. The overall effect is kaleidoscopic and magnificent.

The Dunhuang murals have inherited the patterns of traditional colouring which is said to reflect the exact colours of the objects without any quest for sophisticated colour combinations. It emphasizes the decorative beauty of the hues without any quest for the authentic feelings of the pigments. In complex colouring, there is meticulous design for contrast, off-setting and over-painting to make colours interact with light. Even more remarkable is the technique of "colour change" by breaking away from the convention of specific colouring according to specific category, creating several coloured images/dunhuang which observe the natural colour phenomena by the intended violations, such as red warriors, blue Vajrapanis, green horses, white Bodhisattvas, as well as the Tantric deities with faces of red and green for light and shade effect. Such colour changes were not only dictated by religious requirements but also by aesthetic demands.

Multiple colouring is an important method used in Dunhuang murals to reveal the three-dimensional effect. It has assimilated the three-dimensional method *kṣaya-vriiddhi* of the Western school, blending it with the traditional colouring method of China, enriching the mural technique effect in specific mood and style.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

In mural paintings, a crucial issue is the relationship between colouring and line drawing. Lines are the framework of the image while colours give it flesh and blood. Both complement each other and find a satisfactory solution in Mogao murals which can be summed up thus: "A few lines drawn in thick black ink, strokes coming to life with colour, brush travelling with emotions, colours stored inside colours." It is such a solution which creates an integral and harmonious canvas with rich contents.



### Decorative Composition

A traditional feature of Chinese painting composition is its decorative quality. Dunhuang murals have developed this fine tradition. A general feature of the decorative composition of Dunhuang murals is its fullness, i.e., the entire caves fully covered with paintings. A canvas is laden with rich themes and complicated compositions, and rarely leaving any surface unpainted. In this fullness there is no confusion and everything is neatly in order. Every cave has its overall composition. An illustration of the main theme is painted on the main wall of the cave for prominent viewing, while the rest of the space is used up according to the rules of balance, symmetry and tidiness and unity in variety, creating a three-dimensional artistic superstructure with rhythmic charm and decorative beauty.

Mount Wutai (detail), Cave No. 61, Five Dynasties

The mode of expression varies from painting to painting: in a range comprising single-theme painting, group painting, comic-strip painting, gigantic illustration of sūtra and screen painting. Each of these categories has its own different composition and technique of deployment as well as structural layout and pattern.

The decorative beauty of Dunhuang murals also changed according to the times. Paintings of the early period were typically those which were described as "Human forms larger than mountains, and water which does not have boats"; only the figures of deities are highlighted, all other objects have been treated as "implements" of the painting, as it were. This is a flat decorative beauty showing insensitivity to spaces. The Tang Dynasty created huge illustrations of sūtras with rich contents and complex compositions. Proportions between figures of deities and laity and their surroundings become progressively more rational. Figures are not evenly distributed on the canvas, blending concentration with sparseness and contrasting the main and secondary. Buildings and pavilions occupy the skyline in distinct layers: the spacious sky is above and green water tanks below. Decorative beauty is situated in space, while new vistas are opened up in the painting composition.

The Dunhuang murals have skilfully solved the problem of perspective by the employment of the "bird's-eye view" perspective, used by the Chinese in ancient times. The artists have employed this traditional perspective to compose a large number of gigantic canvases creating the impression of boundless space.

Let us examine a 20-square-metre illustration of Sukhāvati, which shows a platform in the front surrounded by railings and a palace with many pavilions in the centre, and corridors and criss-cross

passages to link the buildings and pavilions behind. On top is the boundless blue sky, and below is an ocean of green waves. Devas and Devis play and rest. Celestial music enchants, and song and dance in high spirit with petals being showered from Heaven. The viewers are standing before a celestial abode in the midst of boundless sky and sea.

Another example is the map of Mount Wutai of a total area of 50 square metres which depicts the several hundred miles of a surrounding area of the holy shrine with hills, rivers, cities, lakes, monasteries, pagodas with roads criss-cross and brisk traffic of travellers. The five peaks stand prominently surrounded by a network of hills and waters, leaving out no corner of the space without painting. The map transposes the ground scenario of several hundred miles to a wall, and reveals the minute details of the holy shrine to the viewer's glance.

In such a wide-angle scenario it is next to impossible to have the perspective. The traditional bird's-eye view helps to depict objects and environment and creates the impression of thousand miles being condensed into a distance of stone's throw. There is grandeur and there is profound decorative beauty as well. The illustrations of sūtras create a magnificent scene at a distance but with visible minor details on closer examination. It is no exaggeration to say that the illustrations are for both distant and close viewing. This is the unique achievement of the national style of Dunhuang murals in pictorial composition.



Bodhisattva, Cave No. 263, Northern Wei



Cave No. 112, Middle Tang

### Delineating the Mood through Art Forms

Delineating the mood of the figures painted is the highest goal in the tradition of Chinese painting. As early as in the Warring States period, Han Feizi pointed out that an image must have spirit. From where does the spirit appear? Ji Kang observed, "Any striking change in the heart obviously speaks out in the appearance."<sup>4</sup> Lu Ji further clarified, "Appearance faithfully reflects one's inner emotion, thus any change of emotion is written on the face."<sup>5</sup> The face is truly the index of inner emotions. Hence Gu Kaizhi paid great attention to the "living spirit" of the figures which he drew. Dunhuang murals pay equal attention to the faithful depiction of the external form of the figures as well as to the in-depth carving of their facial expression. In the painting of the "Sibi Jataka", king Sibi exhibits his unaffected countenance which shows his high endurance of pain. In the illustration of "Sattva feeding himself to the hungry tigress", the parents are depicted as being seized by profound sorrow when they hold the corpse of Sattva and weep, while Sattva's elder brothers are dumbfounded when they discover Sattva's mortal remains, revealing a dramatic excitement of the characters. The grey-haired fairy Vasu with a bird in his hand has a bitter expression after being wrongly accused as a criminal. And Buddha in the scene of preaching, wearing a long dhoti and loose sleeved garment, is seated solemnly, a slight smile lurking in the corner of his mouth, quite aloof from the unworthy scrambles of this mundane world. All such expressions are conveyed through the facial expressions. Yet, it is the eyes which are the most sensitive mirror of inner feelings. Over 2000 years ago, Liu An, the prince of Huainan, observed in the chapter on "spirit" in the book *Huainanzi* (Philosopher of Huainan), "Ears and eyes are the windows of one's soul."

This is an ancient Chinese echo to the modern western artists' description, "The eye is the window of the soul." This fine Chinese tradition has been fully developed in the murals of Dunhuang. We see here in Cave No. 263 of Northern Wei a group of Bodhisattvas in pliable, graceful dancing posture emitting rays from their eyes, which are like lamps shining upon the viewers. In Cave No. 285 of Western Wei we see the Four Devarājas standing erect, trident in hand, eyes livid with rage. We see the meditating Bodhisattva in the illustration of the Sukhāvatī with his right hand cupping his chin. The evenly drawn eye sockets half expose the eyeballs, as if he is looking straight ahead. He also appears not to be looking at anything as though immersed in painful deep thought. We see the aged Buddha disciple in the illustration of Mahāparinirvāṇa, his triangular-shaped eyes slightly revealing the pupils, in an extremely sorrowful state, conveying a feeling of having no desire to live. All such examples from Dunhuang murals amply uphold the observation of the Song Dynasty painter, Zhao Xigao, "Eyes hold the key to the figures of the deity and laity and for all other living creatures. They come to life with their vivid eyes." This rule has been universally adhered to by the creators of Dunhuang mural paintings.

A mood may be delineated by means of the facial expressions or those of the eyes, and it is closely linked to the integral structure of the figures. Huang Quan, an artist of the Five Dynasties, did not dare to modify the painting of Zhong Kui by Wu Daozi, but had the courage to paint another version of the same theme, the reason being Wu's painting of Zhong Kui was an integral piece, interweaving the expression with the form of the figure. Even a slight modification of the finger would have led to a totally different expression of mood. The Dunhuang murals exhibit great discipline in the composition of the integral structures of the figures. The Bodhisattva of Cave No. 285 of Western Wei with his thin face and long drooping hair, wearing a high, bejewelled crown, a loose robe and broad belt, high-heeled shoes covered by clothes, a scarf fluttering over his shoulders encircled by flying petals brings alive the image of a Chinese courtier of the Southern Dynasties. The Bodhisattva in Cave No. 57 of the Early Tang has a plump, gentle and cheerful face, with one hand picking up his shawl and the other extending forward plucking flowers as if he is dancing and offering flowers. He seems to be in high spirits and in a relaxed mood. If without this dancing pose with raised arm the painting would become monotonous and the figure would be deprived of its vivid mood. The innumerable postures of the figures have expressed their varied domains.

There is yet another kind of technique used in the Dunhuang murals to delineate the mood of the characters, i.e., depicting their spiritual state through their interaction with each other. In Cave No. 205 of the Early Tang, a couple of dancers with lotus-like faces, high coiffure and transparent garments dance in quick steps. Their hands are raised. Their scarves fly as they look into each other's eyes with feeling. The artist has created a picture of gentle emotions and of a tender mood. In Cave No. 254 of the Northern Wei we see two Vajra warriors against the background of rising peaks and flowing streams, their bare upper bodies covered by scarves. The two are locked in combat, taking positions of offence and defence as if determined to crush each other.

Yet another area of achievement is in the depiction of the emotions transmitting between one deity and another. In Cave No. 217 of the Early Tang we see Buddha's disciples, their eyes fixed on the altar. On entering the cave viewers get a mystic sense from the eyes of the deities. This probably is what Gu Kaizhi meant by "transmitting feelings by looking at each other's eyes".

Delineating a mood does not only involve expressing the moods and styles of individual figures, but also paying attention to the total mindset conveyed by the gigantic canvas of the illustration of a sūtra. The illustration of Sukhāvatī discussed a little earlier is an attempt to produce for the viewers a fascinating world without anxiety and anguish, a world of Heavenly bliss with various deities, scenarios and auspicious and magical happenings.

### Assimilation of Foreign Art



Cave No. 272, Northern Liang

Both Buddhism and Buddhist art came to China from India, Afghanistan and other places. Initially the Chinese began by copying the foreign examples. Records show that Cao Buxing, an artist of the period of the Three Kingdoms, was one of the earliest painters to copy Buddha's portraits from India. This was followed by modifications as alluded to in the history of Chinese painting, "Tuning the musical instrument; transforming the foreign into Chinese."<sup>6</sup> Simple copying became a thing of the past as Dunhuang art entered a stage of "creating faithfully according to the scriptures". Not only the conventional postures of the Buddha images/dunhuang, i.e., Buddha in motion, in rest, seated or standing, but also the ideological content, forms of expression, characterization, facial features, costumes and moods were all subject to gradual transformation to keep empathy with the cultural tradition, social life, customs and habits and aesthetic temperament of various nationalities of China. Therefore, from a very early stage the Dunhuang murals focussed on Chinese style and artistic characteristics, forming a distinctive system of Chinese Buddhist art. The ancient painters have made outstanding contributions in this regard. Their bold vision and prudence in selectively drawing on the experience of foreign art while inheriting and developing Chinese art tradition is highly commendable.

How Dunhuang murals draw upon foreign art for reference may be elaborated from a discussion of the following two mottoes they followed: 1) learn from physiology or anatomy, and 2) adopt the colouring techniques of the Western Regions. If we compare the tomb murals from the Sixteen Kingdoms with the Dunhuang murals of the same period, we find that the figures on the tomb murals are simple, wearing loose robes. Little attention is paid to their anatomy --- these are more or less symbolic and decorative figures. On the other hand, many figures of Dunhuang murals are half naked, or with naked bodies. The depiction of bodies is well-proportioned showing accurate measurements. Rendered in meticulous detail they appear life-like. How is one to explain this great difference among the works of Chinese painters of the same period? The basic reason is that Chinese painting and Western paintings centring around Graeco-Roman art belonged to two altogether different systems. Chinese art excelled in broad characterization while Western art excelled in realistic depiction.

Chinese painting is based on Confucian ethical teachings, advocating morality and propriety. Hence, the figures are covered in large robes which completely hide their bodies. Only the dressed shape appears, not the exact physiological structure. The emphasis is not on the three-dimensional effect but rather on the "suggestive impression of physical shape". The tomb murals of Wei and Jin and of the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms belonged to this system of symbolic or even decorative representation.

Dunhuang murals were directly influenced by the content, forms and depiction techniques of the Kuca murals which in turn were directly influenced by India and Afghanistan. The early Buddhist art of India and Afghanistan had assimilated the essentials of Western art form. India is a nation rich in songs and dances. Thus the figures in the murals, particularly Bodhisattvas, are well-proportioned with charming and graceful poses, rich in representation of the aesthetics of the body. This approach was accepted by Dunhuang painters and made up for the deficiencies in the Chinese paintings of Han and Jin. With

introduction of the realistic proportions of the human body into the suggestive representation of figures began a new Chinese style of painting.

The second principle concerned the colouring technique of the Western Regions. In the beginning, Chinese paintings had no colour. During the Warring States period, painters began to add a red patch on the cheeks of the figures. It was only during the Han dynasty that the cheeks were painted red to highlight the radiance of the face, producing a somewhat three-dimensional effect. The figures in the Buddhist murals of the Western Regions have colours all over their body; the shaded portions are in dark colours and the bright portions in light colours. The bridge of the nose is highlighted with white powder. This three-dimensional technique which came from India underwent a change after spreading to the Western Regions, with more highlight on the bright side. After reaching Dunhuang, the technique was further improved and merged with the traditional Chinese colouring technique. Gradually, a new method evolved which not only highlighted the lustre on the faces of the figures but also gave it a certain depth. By the Tang Dynasty the method had reached a point of perfection. It was exactly like what people had observed about Wu Daozi's murals, "the figures are eight-dimensional, vivid and lively", and "Daozi's painted figures are like moulded ones". Duan Chengshi praised Wu Daozi's painting in the following couplet:

"Wind and clouds as if moving towards me,  
The wall, it seems is freezing the deities."

Such a scene is found everywhere at Dunhuang. The new colouring technique helped to develop continuously and perfect the realistic style of the murals.

*Translated by Bagyalakshmi and Sonu Agnihotri*

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## Dunhuang Art During the Sixteen Kingdoms and the Northern Dynasties



Interior of Cave No. 249, Western Wei

Dunhuang was one of the four provinces of the Hexi region created during the era of Han Emperor Wu (141-89 B.C.). An important and newly emerged centre in Hexi during the Han Dynasty, it included six counties and two gateways with a population of nearly forty thousand.

During its early stages, the Han Dynasty adopted a series of military measures such as the construction of fortifications, warning towers, garrisons and a wall of defence inside the territory of Dunhuang.<sup>1</sup> During Eastern Han a colonel was posted in Dunhuang for the protection of the Western Regions. Later, General Suo Ban stationed his troops at Yi Wu. These were all measures to deal with the invasions and harassment by Hun chieftains. In the second year of the Yonghe Era (137), Governor Pei Chen of Dunhuang led three thousand soldiers to the west to attack the Huns; by killing their chieftain Hu Yan he ensured the safety of the Western Regions and Hexi.<sup>2</sup> These incidents prove that Dunhuang was a strategic area which could be used to launch an offensive; at the same time during the Han and Jin as also in later times, it proved to be a place that could be easily defended.



Cave No. 249, Western Wei

In order to protect the border, the Han Dynasty also paid attention to the agricultural production of Dunhuang by constructing dams and reservoirs; initiating water conservation and irrigation projects; reclaiming virgin land, settling troops and civilians by allotting them plots. Colonel Cui Buyi who was in charge of fisheries taught farming to the common people. Colonel Zhao Guo who was in charge of granary introduced "daitianfa" (cultivation of fields in alternate strips in alternate years) in order to extend cultivated land by dry land farming. Together, these measures boosted agricultural production in Dunhuang. During the period of the Three Kingdoms, Governor Huangfu Long popularized ploughing and sowing. The Annals recorded the event as: "Saving labour by fifty percent and increasing harvest by fifty percent."<sup>3</sup> Consequently there was a substantial rise in grain output.

While agricultural production developed, Hexi and Dunhuang also saw the appearance of "wu bi" (fortified manor with defence forces). Depictions of such "manors" and "fortifications" are seen in the tomb murals at Jiayu Gate dating back to Wei and Jin dynasties. These "manors" had high walls, with watch-towers above the gates. Inside the "manor" were livestock pens, while outside there were tents in which the guards lived.<sup>4</sup> One such manor was the Zhaoyu Manor in Gaochang village in Xidang township of the Dunhuang county during the Western Liang.<sup>5</sup> During Northern Wei, it was said that "villages and manors



interlinked with each other and there were numerous monasteries, temples and stupas."

The monasteries too resembled the manors since they maintained "Samghika households" (*sengzhihu*) and "Buddha households" (*fotuhu*).<sup>5</sup> Both the manors and the monasteries had in their fold a large number of peasants who were cruelly exploited by their masters.

The development of feudal economy brought with it the prosperity of feudal culture. During the Han and Jin Dynasties there appeared several litterateurs in Dunhuang, like the famous calligrapher and writer, Zhang Zhi and Suo Jing. Particularly during the last years of the Western Jin, many litterateurs with "profound learning in canons and history" took refuge in Liangzhou resulting in the flowering of Chinese culture in the Hexi corridor (which included Gaochang). A large number of manuscripts and murals discovered from the tombs of Wei and Jin periods at Jiuquan, Dunhuang and Turfan are the cultural assets of the times which provided the basis for the development of Buddhist art.

After Dunhuang had become a province, exchanges between China and the Western countries grew rapidly. Zhang Qian's huge second embassy of three hundred-strong to the Western Regions had in its wake "the lining up of envoys on the roads". "A foreign embassy ranged from a hundred odd to several hundred persons." Chinese missions going abroad numbered between five to more than ten every year.

Those who went to neighbouring countries took about three years to return and those who went to far off countries came back only after eight to nine years.<sup>6</sup> Owing to the frequent exchanges between China and the West, China's products, especially silk, flowed uninterruptedly towards the West. Western goods like hide and fur, asbestos and cloth also entered China. All east-west movements were routed through Dunhuang making it the hub of traffic between China and the West.

During the period of the Three Kingdoms, the Dunhuang Governor Cang Ci handled with competence China's foreign affairs with the western states. Any trader coming from the West would be "entertained" with hospitality. For those who specially came to Dunhuang to trade, the government "fixed fair prices and swapped with them the goods from warehouse". After the deal, escorts conducted them safely to the gateway of China. In case they wanted to visit Chang'an and Luoyang, "passes" were issued to them. Cang Ci's courteous treatment of traders of various nationalities from the Western Regions as well as other foreign traders, made him a household name in international circles.<sup>7</sup>

As Eastern Jin ended and Northern Wei unified North China, the "Silk Road" grew even more prosperous: "From Congling (Pamirs) it extended as far as the Roman empire, foreign merchants from innumerable states and cities came to the gateway."<sup>8</sup> "The Biography of Pei Ju" in *Sui Shu* (Annals of the Sui Dynasty) informed that "from the Western Sea (Europe) there are three routes leading to Dunhuang....All routes meet at Dunhuang which is the gateway." In short, since the Han and Jin times Dunhuang was an important station handling economic and cultural exchanges between China and the West.

With the increased traffic between China and the West, Buddhism and Buddhist art also entered Xinjiang along the Silk Road and eventually moved further east along the southern and northern routes. The southern route ran through Khotan and Loulan to Dunhuang, and the northern route through Kuca and Gaochang to Dunhuang. From Dunhuang Buddhist art and religion spread further afield to Liangzhou and into the "heartland" of China.

As a foreign religion, Buddhism was "forcefully resisted" when it entered China. It provoked a series of conflicts like the "contention between Confucianism and Buddhism", between the "Chinese and alien", between "Buddhism and Taoism", between "black and white", and between the "destructibility and indestructibility of the soul". But Buddhism itself offered a superstructure that lent itself suitable for the feudal economy, together with professional efforts in producing annotations, commentaries and

expositions, and it was made out that "Confucius was Buddha and Buddha was Confucius", "Confucius cured social illness, while Buddhism expounded the rationality of his teachings. The two together made up the head and tail and were one and the same."<sup>9</sup> The exponents of Buddhism said that the Buddhist scriptures "embraced the virtue of the Five Confucian canons and expounded to a great depth", and they "embrace the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi and expound their ideas of void in noble words and with substantial truth, creating a sense of solemn inspiration among men. The teachings are brilliant as Buddhist doctrine is so profound that the gods themselves were moved; it is bright like sunshine, pure and fresh like the wind."<sup>10</sup> Here was an attempt to synthesize Buddhism, Confucianism and metaphysics to meet the needs of the times.

We are told that during the era of the Western and Eastern Jin "the rivers are filled with corpses and the plains are bleached by white skeletons."<sup>11</sup> In a society deeply scarred by wars and disasters the sinicized Buddhist ideology spread like an epidemic.

The minority nationalities of the north founded several small dynasties; all of which patronized Buddhism. Each minority nationality had its own set of gods as their spiritual mainstay. Emperor Shi Hu of Late Zhou, Emperor Fu Jian of Early Qin, Emperor Lu Guang of Late Liang, Emperor Juqu Mengsun of Northern Liang, and all the emperors of Northern Wei vied with one another to recruit monks to translate Buddhist scriptures and disseminate the Dharma. Monk Fotudeng (Buddhacinga) of Kuca became famous for the magic tricks he performed to deceive the people even as the common people "vied with one another to construct temples and become monks"; thus Fotudeng got into the good books of Emperor Shi Hu. When he went to court, he was always carried in an ornamental chair by the courtiers to the neighbourhood of the throne while the Emperor rose to greet him. At that moment the master of ceremony would call out "The Mahā Achārya!" then "all those in their seats would stand up to show the high regard he enjoyed."<sup>12</sup> Buddhacinga was elevated to a position rivalling that of the King.



Dhyana-guha, Cave No. 285, Western Wei

Kumārajīva's case is even more telling of the authority bestowed on monks. In order to get hold of the renowned monk, Fu Jian of Early Qin even sent General Lu Guang with an expeditionary force of 70,000 soldiers to distant Kuca. Before Lu Guang's departure, Emperor Fu Jian told Lu Guang at the farewell banquet that his aim was not to seize territory, but to have Kumārajīva brought to him: "Send me Kumārajīva, as soon as you conquer Kuca."<sup>13</sup> Although Fu Jian was not really uninterested in territorial expansion, "like the proverbial folly of proclaiming to have no silver in the place where silver is actually buried", the statement proved that he was extremely desirous of having a renowned monk in his court. In his efforts to obtain the renowned Kashmiri monk Dharmakṣema, Emperor Dao Wu of the Northern Wei Dynasty had sent envoys several times to Liangzhou to fetch him and had even threatened Juqu Mengsun.

He had said, "If you do not send Dharmakṣema I will wage war against you." Juqu Mengsun was firm about his "house guru" and was ready to "die along with him if the emperor decided to press his demand."<sup>14</sup> These were rulers who did not hesitate to wage wars and even risk their own lives for the possession of a monk. They installed Buddhism as a state religion and monks as "Imperial gurus". Their aim was but to propagate the idealistic ideology of "indestructibility of the soul", "karma", "saṃsāra",

"devapura and naraka" and to win over the people. Liu Yilong and Emperor Wen of Song among the Southern Dynasties had let the cat out of the bag when he said, "If throughout the length and breadth of my domain people believe in Buddhism, I shall have no worries but can relax and enjoy a peaceful reign."<sup>15</sup> It was much for the same reason that the rulers of the north patronized Buddhism. They constructed stūpas and temples, excavated caves and sculpted idols, starting a vogue for such activities. It was against such a political background that the Dunhuang grottoes came into existence.

According to an inscription of 698, the Mogao grottoes were first created in 366; this would trace the earliest Mogao cave to Northern Liang during the last phase of the Sixteen Kingdoms period. From Northern Liang through Northern Wei, Western Wei and Northern Zhou of the Northern Dynasties, in more than one hundred and sixty years, a total of thirty-nine of the existing caves are accounted for.

The contents of the caves can be divided into three categories: architecture, stucco sculptures and mural paintings. The three combine to form an organic entity of utility and art.

There are three types of architecture: the first is the meditation rooms for monks called "chanku" (dhyāna-guhā) as seen in Cave Nos. 268, 285 and 487, each of which has two small meditation rooms on either side of the main hall.

The second is the stūpa shrine with a rectangular space and a gabled ceiling in the front. Both ends of the crossbeam are supported by wooden brackets in complete imitation of the wooden structures of "heartland" China. At the rear is the central column as in Cave Nos. 254, 257 and 251. This is the predominant style in the early caves allowing the devotees to go round the stūpa when paying their homage.

The third type is the main hall with an inverted dipper ceiling. The main wall is fitted with an altar with idols inside it where the devotees pay homage and send their offerings: examples of this type may be found in Cave Nos. 272, 249 and 296. This was the place where the devotees may pay homage and send their offerings.

Stucco statues occupy the central part of the caves. The statues of the early period were rather simple, comprising mainly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; such as statues of Maitreya, Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna sitting side by side, preaching statues, meditating statues, contemplative statues, as well as those on the central column depicting the life story of Śākyamuni, Māra Vijaya, the attainment of Enlightenment, and what are generally known as the "four avasthās and eight avasthās". The Buddha statues of Northern Wei generally had attendant Bodhisattvas just as the feudal Emperor had ministers on his left and right. During Northern Zhou two disciples were added to this format of one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, making it a group of five statues.



Maitreya Bodhisattva, Cave No. 254, Northern Wei

Most of the early caves had statues of Maitreya (either as a Buddha or a Bodhisattva) as the main figure, probably in view of Maitreya's role in answering queries during meditation exercises. Generally, the statue of Maitreya is enshrined in the central column and in the niche altar in the upper portion of the northern and southern walls, suggesting that Maitreya has taken residence in "Tushita heaven" high above the others. Cave No. 275 (of Sixteen Kingdoms) can be conceived as a "Maitreya cave". The main statue and the one in the niche are both of Maitreya who sits on the lotus seat in *padmāsana*. The main statue on a twin-lion seat has a headgear which indicates that it is the incarnation of Buddha, the hair falling on the shoulders, the chest and arms exposed, a garland around his neck, a dhoti girding his loins. His left hand (the only one extant) is held in the *cintāmaṇi mudrā*. The statue has a tranquil expression and a robust physique. The statue of Maitreya in Cave No. 254 is covered by a *kaṣāya* which clings to his body so closely that it appears as if he has just emerged from the water. The prominent folds of the *kaṣāya* follow the shape of the body; the depiction is both ornamental and realistic.



Sakyamuni Buddha, Cave No. 268, Northern Liang

The meditating posture was the main theme of the statues during the early times, as may be seen in all the caves of this period. This was due to the prevalence of meditation as an exercise of mental cultivation in north China. "Meditation" is the exercise practised regularly under the guidance of *adhyāna* master to achieve a tranquil mind. The Buddha image inside the arched altar sitting in *padmāsana*, with one hand on top of the other in the meditation mudra and the *kaṣāya*-clad figures of monks with closed eyes and in deep thought that we witness at Mogao, are visible reminders of "excavating a cave for meditation".



Donor Bodhisattvas, Cave No. 248, Northern Wei



The meditating Buddha image in Cave No. 263 which we have discovered after dismantling the sealed wall of the Western Xia period is a well-preserved figure, the colours still retaining their original freshness. It is a typical statue of the early period which has its original appearance.

The thinking Bodhisattvas of the early period at Mogao take their positions in high celestial places with one foot resting on the other, while sitting, cheek cupped in the right palm and their eyes looking downwards as if immersed in deep and painful thought.

Taoist monk ascending to heaven, Cave No. 297, Northern Zhou

The Bodhisattva statues of Cave No. 248 are among the few original creations of Mogao which have not been tampered with by later patrons. The heads of the statues, all have the same pattern possibly because they were made from moulds. However, they show minor differences after colouring. The common features of the statues are their handsome looks and tranquil expression. Their white faces look smooth and jade-like against their headdresses and painted haloes which are in dark colours.

Ānanda and Kāśyapa first made their appearance in Northern Zhou. All the Ānanda statues are Chinese in appearance with round faces and youthful and intelligent looks. Most of the Kāśyapa statues bear a foreign look with a high nose, dark eyes and broad cheeks. Some show loose muscles and haggard looks, while others have a bitter smile, certainly a realistic portrayal of Kāśyapa who was a seasoned man used to hardships.

In the Northern Wei period, on either side of the niche's lintel, there appeared the decorations of

pterodactyl and phoenix, the former as a demonstration of power and the latter of swiftness.

There is a unique statue of a winged angel with a dragon which adorns the niche in Cave No. 297. The winged angel has two horns on his head, feather on his arms and bird's claws. One foot straddles the dragon's back suggesting that the angel is riding the dragon. This statue is derived from the Taoist concept of fairies and shows the extent of Taoist influence on Buddhist sculpture.



Buddha and Bodhisattvas, Cave No. 432, Western Wei

In the altar itself, various techniques have been employed to represent hierarchy among the celestials. The main figure, whether that of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, is usually a rounded figure in stucco. The Bodhisattvas and disciples accompanying him have rounded heads; their bodies are partially merged into the wall by a technique of high relief. Flying figures and attending Bodhisattvas of a subordinate status are present in large numbers in small moulded figures. The flying figures of Cave No. 432 are fine specimens of this technique of the Northern Dynasties. They have thin and handsome faces, their top knots fall to one side; in their loose robes and skirts, they appear to be dancing with their sleeves, as if flying with the wind. All the different techniques merge to form a harmonious and well-proportioned composition not only highlighting the principal figure but also achieving an overall integrity.



Preaching Scene, Cave No. 263, Northern Wei

The Mogao murals show greater richness of colour than the stucco statues and form the main component of Dunhuang art. In general, the murals of the early caves were executed according to an integral plan of chessboard designs on the ceiling and free patterns in-between the rafters. The central portion of the four walls has Buddha figures and illustrations of the main theme stories, while the lower part is painted with groups of small sized worshippers. The upper parts of the four walls have panels of celestial musicians and the lowest section has paintings of Vajra warriors. The rest of the walls is densely covered with a "Thousand Buddhas", i.e., miniature Buddhas, all of which go to create a solemn and sacred "Realm of Buddha".

The murals may be divided into five categories on the basis of their contents:

1. Paintings of the Deities
2. Illustration of Stories

3. Mythological Themes
4. Decorative Designs
5. Portraits of the Donors

## 1. Paintings of the Deities



Cave No. 435, Northern Wei

These mainly comprise the preaching Buddhas for the viewers to pay their homage --- either Buddhas of the three periods, past, present and future; or the "Trikaya"; or episodes of Buddha's life stories showing him preaching at different times and places to different audiences. On the northern wall of Cave No. 263 is a large canvas with Buddha in the centre surrounded on all sides by graceful dancing Bodhisattvas. Above him are the flying figures showering petals. Below the Buddha's seat is the dharmacakra below which lies a pair of deer. The scene refers to Buddha's "turning the dharmacakra" at the Deer Park (Sārnāth) where he gave his first sermon after he had attained enlightenment.

The painting of "The preaching Buddha" in Cave No. 249 is slightly different from the one just described. The Buddha stands solemnly and his hands seem to be in the dharmacakra-pravartana ("cakra-turning")mudrā. A canopy adorned with twin-dragons is placed above him. Below is the ratna-studded lotus pond. This treatment of the "Preaching Buddha" already bears the rudiments of later illustrations of Sukhāvati.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

Paintings of the preaching Buddha from the last phase of Northern Wei are grand spectacles crowded with celestial figures. Both the paintings on the north and south walls of Cave No. 248 have large canvases. Buddha is seated in the centre in padmāsana. His appearance is both sacred and majestic while attendant Bodhisattvas are shown on either side in lively and varied postures, some whispering to each other, others dancing with their flowing sleeves, some offering flowers with devotion, others playing around arm in arm. The earlier atmosphere of solemn religiosity is giving way to the worldly life of mankind.

Celestial musicians and flying figures are a part of the attendants of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The musicians are placed on top of the four walls, inside the celestial mansions. Only half of their figures are visible; with their jewel-studded headgears and thin capes they have quite the appearance of Bodhisattvas. Some of the celestial musicians play the lute (*pipa*), some play the harp (*konghou*), some others play the round lute (*ruanxian*). Some beat the waist-drums and others play the flutes. Dancers vie with the musicians in this heavenly



bliss, waving their arms and swinging their waists making the viewers feel:

"What a joyous scene  
Music and dance in mid-Heaven!"<sup>16</sup>

Cave No. 272, Northern Liang

Flying figures called "xiangyin shen" (literally, gods of fragrant music) or Gandharvas present a graceful artistic genre in cave art. In their early appearances they flaunt a Western style with a naked upper torso, jewel-studded headgear, scarf and dhoti. In later periods they have a sinicized appearance with handsome faces and charming figures, beautiful clothes and long scarves. They hover around the ceilings, fill in the corners of the chessboard designs, form a part of Buddha's halo and fly above the venue of Buddha's preaching.

The flying figures are shown in various kinds of dancing postures: some ascending with spread arms, some descending with straight heads, some flying in a group with the ones in front beckoning their followers, showering petals as they fly. There are others carrying lotus with both hands and with legs arched over their heads in the *dhyanurāsana*. What a rich fare of dynamic postures and colours! Most striking are the flying nudes both male and female with their legs extended; they are shown in circular dancing movements full of ease. In the paintings of Northern Zhou, celestial musicians soar from the Heavenly Palaces and form the vast column of flying figures: hundreds of figures dance in the azure sky with the ornamented mansions below them.

Warriors who are the guardians of dharma appear on the lower portions of the four walls. They have a grotesque appearance and a muscular and powerful build; some are painted with upraised arms as if carrying the universe, some are engaged in a martial contest, some are playing musical instruments, yet others dance with their scarves or stand upside down or bounce into each other as though enacting a range of folk operas.

The most numerous representations of Buddha are the miniature "Qian Fo" (Thousand Buddhas). Though somewhat stereotyped, they form groups of four or five and compose a totality of myriads of illustrious figures with varying colour combinations, shrouding the entire cave in a layer of religious mysticism.

## **2. Illustrations of Stories** (*also called "Jing Bian" or illustrations of sūtras*)

These were composed with the aim of inculcating the Buddhist ideology into the viewers. This forms the most important component of early murals, possessing an even greater appeal than the paintings of Buddha.

About twenty kinds of story paintings from the early period in about thirty pictures have been preserved. These may be divided into three categories. The first category comprising the life stories of Śākyamuni is



a theme which dominates the early murals. In almost every early cave one may see the four or eight episodes of Buddha's life represented either in painting or in sculpture. The life story in Cave No. 428 probably contains 12 episodes, including the Holy Birth and Nirvāṇa on the same wall, which is rather unique. The life story of Buddha in Cave No. 290 is arranged in six parallel panels serially illustrating all the scenes from Śākyamuni's birth up to his departure from home. Such a lengthy composition is seldom to be found among the Buddhist story paintings which we have discovered so far in China.

The second category comprises the Jātaka stories which propagate Śākyamuni's "good deeds" in his previous births, and stories arising from the religious belief that the soul is indestructible, and that past, present and future lives are linked with karma of rewards and retributions. Among the early murals are illustrations of "King Chandraprabha donating his head to a heretic"; "King Śibi feeding the hawk with his own flesh"; "Prince Sattva feeding himself to the hungry tigress"; "The nine-coloured deer rescuing a drowning man"; "Sushānti offering his flesh to feed his parents"; "Sāmaka's loyalty and filial piety"; "Sudana giving alms generously"; and "King Bilengkali willingly being nailed a thousand places on his body", etc. These are all popular themes but they have been rendered in a variety of ways.

The third category is made of stories of Hetuprataya which propagate the magical power of Buddha in coming to the rescue of suffering people such as: "Sumati burning incense to invoke Buddha's blessings"; "Bhikṣuṇī Sūkṣmā preaching her own experiences"; "Conversion of 500 robbers"; "Kalyāṇakārī Jātaka"; "Sundarānanda being induced by Buddha to renounce the world"; and "Śrāmaṇera observing the Śīla by committing suicide".

Northern Zhou was dominated by "Sanjiejiao" (the Three Phases or Schools of Buddhism), which professes that "if you dispense with your wealth, you will get a great fortune."<sup>17</sup> An incomplete illustration of "Futian" (cultivation of the field of fortune) is to be found in Cave No. 296. According to the relevant Sūtra there should be seven events of alms-giving but only five are painted in this cave. They are: building stūpas, building Buddhist shrines and quarters for the monks; planting orchards and constructing tanks and bowers for travellers; offering medicines and curing sickness; building bridges for the weak; and digging roadside wells for thirsty passersby. In this painting we find separate depictions of living conditions but no religious atmosphere. This theme is also found in the Sui Dynasty Cave No. 303 in an even more vivid depiction than the earlier cave. The Sanjie teaching was propounded by Xinxing and prevailed in "heartland" China. But its impact was felt even in the remote Dunhuang caves.

The majority of the topics of the story paintings are related to dhyana and the "cultivation of the six pāramitās". But the different stories have been interpreted in different artistic presentations which I shall briefly discuss below.

(1) *King Chandraprabha offering his head to the heretic.*<sup>18</sup> It is said in the scripture that Chandraprabha was a benevolent ruler doing his best to help the poor and distressed and was "like a parent to the common people". He incurred the jealousy of King Pinosina, who announced that if anyone who could bring him the head of Chandraprabha he would be rewarded with half the kingdom and the hand of his daughter in marriage. The heretic Raudrākṣa enlisted himself for this job and after overcoming various obstacles he entered the palace and begged King Chandraprabha for his head. The King was willing "to abandon this sinful head to fetch Raudrākṣa's good fortune". The queen, the princes and the courtiers tried in vain to dissuade him; the determined King told Raudrākṣa, "Come and cut off my head and let it fall into my hands, then take it away." When Raudrākṣa raised his sword, the Tree God used his magical powers and turned Raudrākṣa's head towards the opposite direction, paralysed his limbs and made the sword fall to the ground from where none could raise it. At this point the King told the Tree God, "In the

past, I had offered my head as alms 999 times under this very tree. This will be the thousandth time that I shall offer it. Please do not stop him." Thereupon Raudrākṣa took away the King's head leaving behind the mourning queen, princes, courtiers and subjects.

The earliest painting based on this story shows only a single scene of Chandraprabha offering his head. Chandraprabha is seated in the centre. An attendant holds a tray in front of him with three heads in it, symbolizing the King's having offered his head a thousand times, yet never losing his countenance. The composition and characterization are extremely simple, betraying a certain immaturity in the treatment of the story.



Sattva Jataka, Cave No. 254, Northern Wei

(2) *Prince Sattva feeding himself to the hungry tigress:*<sup>19</sup> The Buddhist scripture says that the King of Baodian had three sons, the youngest of whom was named Mahāsattva. One day the three princes went to the forest and saw a tigress with her cubs. Compelled by hunger the tigress was about to eat her own cubs. Sattva offered his own life to save the cubs. He went close to the tigress and stretched himself before her. The hungry tigress was too weak to devour her prey. Sattva climbed a mound, found a sharp stick and pierced his own neck. With the blood dripping from his wound he jumped down and lay before the animal. The hungry tigress first licked his blood, then feasted on his flesh. The other two brothers who had found Sattva missing retraced their tracks and finally saw their brother's remains. They ran to the palace in panic and informed the King that Sattva had fed himself to the tigress. The King and Queen rushed to the site and found only the scattered bones of their son. His mother held his head and the father his arm and they cried in grief. Later the two brothers collected the remains in a jewel-studded casket and built a stūpa as a monument.

Only two paintings based on this story are found among the murals of the early period. They are in Cave Nos. 254 and 428 of which the one in Cave No. 254 is the earlier. This painting has seven scenes accommodated on one picture: the three princes spotting the hungry tigress in the mountain; Sattva stabbing his neck and jumping off the cliff to feed himself to the tigress; the Queen embracing the body of the prince and crying bitterly; and the family members gathering the remains and building a stūpa to remember the prince.

This theme propagated the idea of "Sacrificing oneself to rescue all beings". Along with obliterating class differences in society, Buddhism regarded all forms of life --- bird, beast, fish and insect --- equal to man,

thus advocating toleration of endless humiliation and sacrifice. The composition of this painting is unique, interweaving as it does different episodes taking place at varying moments into an integral entity. There is a refreshing treatment of certain scenes in the painting such as the prince piercing his neck, jumping from the cliff and feeding himself to the hungry tigress, all of which appear in a row. But the tigress' feasting on his flesh and leaving scattered part of the body does not find place in the canvas. On the contrary, Sattva's body, clothes, ornaments are shown intact as if he was alive or rather asleep when the tigress greedily feeds on him and particularly when he is held as a corpse in the arms of his crying mother. This imaginative and new treatment has succeeded in erasing the cruel and terrifying element of the story, creating instead a harmonious composition.

(3) *The nine-coloured deer saves the drowning man:*<sup>20</sup> According to the scripture there was a citizen who cried out for help as he was about to drown. The nine-coloured deer jumped into the water risking its own life and rescued the man from the water. Grateful to the deer for saving his life, the man knelt down and expressed his willingness to be its slave. The deer declined the offer but wanted him only to keep its whereabouts a secret. The man made a solemn pledge to this effect and left. Meanwhile the queen of the region had a dream in which she saw a deer of nine colours and silver horns. The following day the queen told the king about her dream and asked him to capture the deer so that she could make a dress out of its skin. Thereupon the king announced a reward promising the one, who could capture the deer, a share of his territory and wealth. On hearing about the reward the man, who had been saved by the deer became too covetous to abide by morality; he went to the palace and informed the king of the deer's whereabouts and led the king to the mountain to capture the deer. Meanwhile the deer lay sleeping in his hideout, unaware of these developments. When the deer's good friend, the crow, saw the king approaching with a huge army he awakened the deer with loud cries. Roused from his deep sleep, the deer found itself surrounded on all sides by the king's soldiers and could not escape. Then, in the presence of the king, the deer accused the man whose life it had saved of betraying his own saviour. Appreciating the service that the deer had rendered to the man, the king allowed the deer to return to the mountain. He also passed an order throughout the country banning anyone to capture the deer. The treacherous man found himself covered with sores all over the body while the queen died in fury and dismay.



Deer King Jataka (detail), Cave No. 257, Northern Wei

Though imprinted with the stamp of Buddhism, the story is a fine specimen of folk tale. This painting follows the traditional horizontal scroll composition beginning the narrative from both ends and concluding it in the centre. Six episodes are depicted crowning its illustrations with the treachery of the informer. The king dressed in the Western style is seated in a palace of Chinese architecture. The queen who is made

up in the Kuca fashion, sits beside the king leaning against him with her head turned to gaze upon the informer. Her right arm rests on the king's shoulder, with her index finger raised as if in an up-and-down movement. From beneath her long skirt which touches the floor, a bare foot may be seen; it is as if her toes shake unconsciously. These vivid details of an enchantress reveal the inner excitement of a selfish person who is urging the king to capture the deer. Even more noticeable is the deer's characterization departing from the conventional treatment of the scripture where the deer is kneeling for a long time beseeching the king. The pitiable creature seen in the murals and carvings of India and other Western Regions is transformed into a fearless standing deer, accusing the man of unethical behaviour. Such a treatment brings out the artist's understanding and evaluation of the deer and also the concentration of his own feelings in his portrayal of the deer.



Cave No. 257, Northern Wei

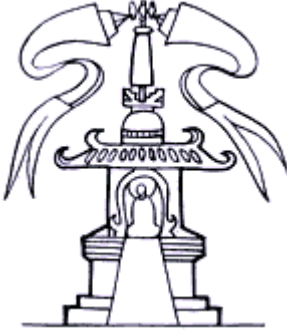
(4) *Śrāmaṇera committing suicide to observe the śīla*.<sup>21</sup> It is told in *Xianyu jing* (Sūtra for the Wise and Foolish) that there was an elder who sent his son to be initiated into monkhood. The guru taught him all the disciplines to be observed by a monk. One day the guru asked the disciple to go for alms to a house whose members had gone to a feast leaving behind a young girl of sixteen. The monk knocked on the door and asked for food. The girl opened the door and fell in love with the monk as soon as she saw him. She expressed her love for him quite frankly but the monk remained unmoved. In order to save himself from further temptation he stabbed himself to death. According to the Indian custom, if a monk died in a layman's house, the latter had to pay a fine of one thousand cash. The elder of the house rushed with gold, silver and other treasures to the king to pay the compensation. The king cremated the monk in the flames of aromatic wood and built a stūpa in his memory.



Sramanera observed the Sila, Cave No. 257, Northern Wei

There are two paintings of this theme, one in Cave No. 257 and the other in Cave No. 285. The theme advocates Buddhist asceticism and forms the teaching material to admonish the monks against impurity. It is no accident that the painting reappears twice in the caves of the Northern Dynasties. In north China, a large number of monks and nuns often observed the śīla of the monastic order in the contravention. The renowned monk Kumārajīva lived together with the princess of Kuca in a hideout, drinking and making love. Later, while in the Chinese capital he did not live in the temple but in a special villa, openly entertained by enchanting girls.<sup>22</sup> Dharmakṣema eloped with the younger sister of the king of Shanshan to Liangzhou where he was honoured as a holy man by Juqu Mengxun, who even sent his daughter and daughter-in-law to the residence of the "holy man" to receive "the secret of childbearing".<sup>23</sup>

During the Northern Wei Dynasty, monks and nuns became even more licentious. In the city of Luoyang, imperial ladies entered the monks' rooms in the day time while the holy disciples cohabited with the nuns at night. A contemporary folk song went:



Cave No. 257, Northern Wei

"Flippant young men of Luoyang  
Quick on the run to become Śramaṇas,  
There the bhikṣuṇīs of the nunnery  
Have been virtual brides in secrecy."

A painting by artist Liu pointed out instances of abortions in the monasteries which he found too numerous to describe.<sup>24</sup> This was why the mural painting of "Śramaṇera observes the śīla and commits suicide" reappeared now and then.

The two paintings of the theme belong to two different periods. The artists' selection of the scenes also shows different treatments of the theme. The one in Cave No. 285 is not as complete as that in Cave No. 257, but it is richer in artistic expression. In the painting, the inner excitement of the daughter at meeting with the begging monk is not shown through any overt representation of flirting, but by drawing a monkey on the roof to suggest the young girl is in a state of "xin yuan yi ma" (mind caught by the monkey and mood like a running horse). This is a more subtle depiction as compared to the painting in Cave No. 257.

(5) *Lady Sumati invoking Buddha:*<sup>25</sup> According to the scripture, a gentleman by the name of "Anabindi" arranged a big banquet for his son's marriage and invited six thousand non-Buddhists. On seeing the boorish heretics, Sumati shut herself up in her room declining to see the guests. On his friend's advice the father finally acceded to Sumati's desire to invite her guru Śākyamuni to attend a vegetarian banquet. Sumati dressed herself splendidly, burnt incense and prayed on the terrace to invoke the presence of Buddha. The entire family reverently waited outside the house for Buddha's descent. Buddha smelt the incense and promptly sent his messenger Gandha who descended with a cauldron. Following him were ten Buddha disciples who also descended, one after another.

Monk Kunti descended in the form of five hundred flowering trees.

Suddhipanthaka descended on the back of five hundred calves.

Rāhula descended riding on five hundred peacocks.

Kapphina descended riding five hundred garudas.

Uruvilva Kāśyapa descended riding five hundred dragons.

Subhūti descended with five hundred beryl mountains.

Kātyāyana descended riding five hundred celestial swans.

Revata descended riding five hundred tigers.

Aniruddha descended riding five hundred lions.

Mahā Kāśyapa descended riding five hundred horses.

Maudgalyāyana descended riding five hundred elephants.

Śākyamuni along with his attendants was the last to descend to the elder's house. He used various magical powers to subdue the heretics. All the members of Sumati's family were greatly impressed and became his disciples.

We have this story painted in seventeen scenes in a comic-strip composition. Particularly skilful is the depiction of deities descending from Heaven and descriptions of various steeds. There is vividness in the toughness of the calves, the swiftness of dragons, galloping of the horses, clumsiness of the elephants, the light-winged flight of carefree gambols of the celestial swans, the imposing solitude of the mountains, each with its particular character and charm. Although imaginative, the descriptions of the special

features of different animals reveal a mastery of form.



Sumati Invoking Buddha, Cave No. 257, Northern Wei

(6) *Prince Sudāna gifting away the country's elephant:*<sup>26</sup> It is said in the scripture that *Sudāna*, the Crown Prince of Yebo state, was a generous person whose fame had spread to the neighbouring states. He made a vow of not disappointing anyone who comes to make a demand from him. The King had a white elephant called Sudhayan which was so strong that it was capable of taking on 60 elephants. The country never lost a battle because of this elephant. Unfriendly neighbouring states treated it as a terror and bribed eight brāhmaṇas who travelled to Yebo and begged the Prince for the elephant. The Prince would not break his vow, and so gifted away the white elephant. The courtiers complained before the King that the Crown Prince knew no restraint in his generosity, that the coffers were about to become empty and that the elephant which had been the main defender of the state was now given away to the enemy. The King was furious on hearing this and exiled the Prince as punishment. The Prince took leave of the King and Queen and after giving away all his property to the people, left the palace with his wife and sons. The people of the state bid him a tearful farewell. The Prince left home on a chariot which he himself drove. On the way he met a brāhmaṇa who begged the Prince for the horse. After gifting away the horse, the Prince resumed the journey pulling the carriage. There came another brāhmaṇa who wanted the carriage and this request too was granted. A third brāhmaṇa wanted his clothes and the Prince parted with his own. The Prince went on foot to a wild field. Suddenly, he came across a wonderful city which was created by Buddha's magical power for him to rest. The inhabitants of the city greeted him with music, clothes, food and drink. The Prince proceeded and went to a mountain where he saw celestials learning the dharma. The Prince halted in the mountain and lived on wild fruits and spring water. He constructed a small wooden house of three rooms: one for his wife, one for his two sons and one for himself. The two sons played with monkeys and lions of the jungle. The wife plucked vegetables and fruits to feed the family. After some time there came a brāhmaṇa to ask the Prince for the two sons to be his wife's slave boys. The Prince washed the brāhmaṇa's hands with water, tied the sons with a rope and handed them over to the brāhmaṇa. The two boys were unwilling to leave their beloved parents whereupon the Prince thrashed them till they bled. When the wife returned with the vegetables and fruits, she found her two sons gone and cried bitterly not wishing to live anymore. Later, the brāhmaṇa took the two boys to the market for sale and were brought by the King's men into the palace. After seeing his two grandsons, the King made enquiries and sent his courtiers to the mountain to bring back the Prince. We have an illustration of this theme drawn as a composition in comic-strip series. There is a total of seventeen scenes, beginning with the Prince's gifting away of the elephant up to the episode of giving away his sons. The human figures and their costumes are all in Chinese style. Landscape and houses fill

in the spaces to both separate and connect the different episodes; this serves to properly place the figures into their specific context and makes the portrayal life-like. This is a new development in the early story painting as a result of influences from "heartland" China.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

(7) *Conversion to Buddhism of Five Hundred Robbers.*<sup>27</sup> The scripture refers to 500 robbers who often robbed the travellers in the kingdom of Magadha resulting in "the royal highway being cut off". The King sent a huge army and captured the bandits. He sentenced them to cruel punishment, cutting off their nose and ears and gouging out their eyes, and afterwards banishing them to the forests. The bandits cried out in sorrow and their cries were heard by Buddha. By his magical powers Buddha brought them medicine from Gandhamadana and restored their sight. He then preached to the bandits. The 500 bandits were converted and ordained into monkhood, and they practised dhyana in the deep forests.

The painting depicting this theme in Cave No. 285 is composed of eight scenes. The first scene shows the intense battle and the last shows bandits being ordained as monks. The painting of the robbers' conversion appeared again and again during Western Wei and Northern Zhou clearly in close connection with the peasant uprisings during and after the later period of Northern Wei. The Hexi region was also threatened by the peasant uprising. Especially when the gang of Zhang Bao of Guazhou city slew its governor, Chen Qing, and the gang of Lu Xing of Jinchang killed their governor, Guo Si, the ruler of the area felt threatened as is evident in his observations. He said sorrowfully, "The fields lie wasted. The road to the government is obstructed. Etiquette is not observed between the ruler and subjects. This chaos has been with us for many years."<sup>28</sup> The peasant uprisings blocked the communication line between Dunhuang and the capital, Luoyang, so that Yuan Rong was unable to pay homage to the Emperor. He then constructed Buddhist shrines in a big way, copied a lot of Buddhist scriptures, banking on the blessings of Buddha. His ardent hope was that "people in all the four directions become Buddhists and robbers are disbanded" to maintain law and order in his domain.

(8) *Śākyamuni's life story.*<sup>29</sup> The painting of Buddha's life story in Cave No. 290 of Northern Zhou is mainly based on the text of *Xiuxing benqi jing* (Sūtra on Causations). It is mentioned in the Sūtra that Māyādevī dreamt of a Bodhisattva riding a white elephant descending upon her amidst celestial music. When the King asked the gurus to explain the omen, some of them confirmed the happening of "a deity entering into the womb". The Queen was indeed pregnant. All the subordinate rulers hailed the auspicious omen. At the end of the tenth month the Queen was amusing herself in the garden: when she stretched out her hand to touch the Aśoka tree, a baby was born from her right side. The new-born Prince could not only walk but with every step he took, a lotus blossomed in his footstep. Nine dragons in the sky ejected water for the Prince's bath. The Queen and Prince returned to the Palace riding the dragon carriage. Celestial musicians played music while other deities formed the entourage. The King and all his courtiers and officials lined up to welcome the new-born. The King dismounted from the horse and saluted the Prince, then carried him into a temple. The spiritual guru christened him Siddhārtha. The return of the Prince to the Palace was accompanied by the appearance of thirty-two auspicious scenes such as: roads and streets cleaning themselves; filthy spots being transformed into fragrant places; empty wardrobes and stands filling up with clothes; all the rivers purifying themselves; celestial jewels glittering all over the palace; five hundred cattle simultaneously giving birth to calves; celestials from all directions offering jewels; a jewel-studded open chariot descending as an offering by

the deities; five hundred lions surrounding the city gates; Nāgarājas and Naginīs encamping around the palace; all the activities of the Hell coming to a standstill and all poison and affliction vanishing; vicious pests disappearing while auspicious birds start singing; hunters and fishermen suddenly became merciful and all hatred is erased; the udumbara blossoming\* and lions emerging from flowers creating a sense of awe among all supernatural beings! Then an Ārya saint descended to the palace. He bathed and changed his dress in preparation for the royal audience in which he requested to see the Prince. He saw the Prince and congratulated the King for the arrival of the holy being.

The King built four seasonal palaces for the Prince, selected 500 famous girls to play music, sing and dance to keep the Prince happy and another 500 servants to look after the Prince's studies. However the Prince was overtaken by grief from the time of his arrival in the palace. The King consulted his courtiers and decided to arrange his marriage with the daughter of King of Xubofu. The princess arranged an open contest for the princes of various states who sought her hand and she promised to marry the winner of the contest. As Siddhārtha was on his way to the contest, a white elephant blocked the entrance to the city; the Prince threw the elephant outside the city gate. In the course of the contest the Prince overpowered his cousin Ānanda and his arrow shot through seven iron drums; then he tossed his garland right on the princess. Even after his marriage, the Prince was still depressed. The King consulted his courtiers and arranged two more marriages for his son. Believing him (i.e., the Prince) to be settled in life, the King asked the Prince to go out on excursions from the palace. Outside the east gate he met an old man. Outside the south gate he met a sick person. Outside the west gate he saw a funeral. Outside the north gate he met a monk. He went to the countryside and was pained by the sight of animals and birds preying upon one another. How transient was life, he thought. He then sat under a tree pondering upon the miseries of birth, old age, sickness and death. At night he tossed about in bed, unable to sleep. Then he rode on a white horse and left the city at midnight under the escort of the angels. After seeing him out of the city the horseman kissed his feet and returned to the palace with the white horse. His wife embraced the horse and wept bitterly. The entire palace was wrapped in sorrow. The Prince entered the jungle, changed his clothes and started practising austerities along with other ascetics.

The painting of Buddha's life story in Cave No. 290 is 25-metre long in comic-strip design of about 80 main scenes. The description is rich and full. It is the best preserved amongst such paintings on Buddha's life in China.

Artistically, the style of this painting shows further sinicization. The costumes are of the styles of Han and Jin. The Indian King Sudhodana is painted like Chinese emperor. Māyādevī is attired like a Chinese queen. The dragon carriage which brings the Prince back to the palace is similar to the cloud chariot in Gu Kaizhi's "Painting on the Goddess of River Luo": it is adorned by dragon-head designs with a canopy in addition to carvings of fish guards on the sides. The line drawings, characterization and colouring are all done in Chinese technique. The tendency is towards suggestive depiction: for example, the theme of death is introduced by showing a hearse instead of a corpse. The treatment of main characters is original. At the time of birth, the Prince is an infant and after taking seven steps he has attained manhood. When the Ārya saint holds him in his arms the Prince is an infant and after returning to the palace he is a fully grown person. The flexibility in treating the details according to the space of the canvas is evidence of a superior artistic imagination.

(9) *Bhikṣuṇī Sukṣmā speaking of her own experiences:*<sup>30</sup> The scripture says, *Sukṣmā* married a Brahmachārī of a family of the same social and economic status. She first had a son and when she was pregnant again, her husband escorted her to her parents' home. On the way he was bitten by a poisonous snake just at the time when *Sukṣmā* delivered her baby. She sorrowfully continued her onward journey with her children and came to a river. She first waded through the river and placed her second



son on the other shore. When she returned to fetch the elder son, the child was so eager to be with his mother that he rushed into the water before she could reach him and was drowned in the current. When *Sukṣmā* turned back to the other bank, a hungry wolf had already devoured her infant son. She was too grief-stricken to live after this sudden death of her husband and children.

At this time she met an old Brāhmaṇa, a friend of her parents. On enquiry, *Sukṣmā* was shocked to know from the old man that only the preceding night both her parents had been burnt alive while the house was gutted by fire. *Sukṣmā* had no place to go and was taken to the home of the kind elder. Not long after she married a Brāhmaṇa of the neighbourhood. The husband was of a careless sort and came home extremely drunk one night. Suksma was just then giving birth to a child and was therefore unable to open the gate for him. The Brāhmaṇa broke open into the house in a fit of rage. He beat up *Sukṣmā*, fried the infant and forced *Sukṣmā* to eat it up. *Sukṣmā* was horrified and ran away at midnight. She found herself in a cemetery. A young Brāhmaṇa was mourning beside his wife's tomb. The sufferers fell in love with each other and got married. Unfortunately after seven days the husband died of illness. According to the Indian custom prevalent at that time the widow had to be buried as a sacrifice along with the dead husband. After she was buried alive, a group of robbers came to plunder the grave at night. *Sukṣmā* was brought back to the world yet again. The robber chief was attracted by the beauty of *Sukṣmā* and made her his wife. However, he was soon caught by the government and was beheaded for his crimes. *Sukṣmā* was once again buried alive. Hungry wolves dug up the grave to eat the corpse and *Sukṣmā* was once again saved. Thereupon she came out naked to see Buddha to whom she narrated all her misfortunes in life; she was finally ordained as a bhikṣuṇī.

The paintings of this story at Mogao highlight karma. The first scene shows that in her previous birth *Sukṣmā* killed her husband's first wife's son with a needle-- this becomes the seed for future retribution. Then the scroll unfolds horizontally narrating the life story of the woman and leading to the climax of her becoming a bhikṣuṇī. Finally, after being buried alive the final stage of karma is arrived. *Sukṣmā's* story of being forced to marry thrice, of being buried alive twice, of her family being repeatedly destroyed and her dear ones killed --- all this is a mirror of the afflictions of the women in feudal society. They were kept at the bottom of the social pyramid.

(10) *Prince Kalyāṇakārī going to the sea in search of the maṇi*:<sup>31</sup> It is said in the scripture that the King of Baokai state had no sons. He entered the deep jungles to seek the boon of two celestial persons who then agreed to reincarnate to create posterity for him. The golden fairy was reincarnated as the first wife's son who was christened "*Kalyāṇakārī*" (*Shanshi*). The second celestial was reincarnated as the second wife's son who was christened "*Aghakārī*" (*Eshi*). Both the King and the Queen loved *Kalyāṇakārī*, and built him a comfortable palace for each of the three seasons: a warm palace during winter, a cool palace during summer and a central palace for enjoying spring and autumn. When *Kalyāṇakārī* went out of the palace in an elephant-driven chariot, people lined up the streets and peeped out from high buildings to cheer him. When the Prince saw the old and sick beggars on the roadside, he felt pity for them. When he saw living creatures being hunted, captured, slaughtered and butchered for the food and clothing of man he felt saddened. He requested the King to open up the chests and warehouses to dispense charity among the people. By and by the royal coffers became empty. The courtiers complained. The Prince consulted various people and decided to enter the sea to request Nāgarājas for jewels. Aghakārī came to know of this and joined the expedition but because of his greed, the overloaded ship capsized and all those on board fell into water. *Kalyāṇakārī* landed in the Nāgarājas's palace, found a priceless maṇi (jewel) and hid it in his top knot. When the wicked Aghakārī came to know that *Kalyāṇakārī* had got the maṇi, he blinded *Kalyāṇakārī* in both eyes with a sharp bamboo, took away

his maṇi and returned to the kingdom. Fortunately, the King of Bulls and the shepherds found the unconscious *Kalyāṇakārī* lying on the ground, they saved his life and presented him with a harp. *Kalyāṇakārī* left the shepherds and wandered in the streets playing the harp and begging for food. A gardener of the King hired him to scare away the birds in his orchard. *Kalyāṇakārī* did so by ringing a bell which was tied to a long rope. In his leisure he played the harp to amuse himself. One day the princess came to the orchard and saw *Kalyāṇakārī*. They fell in love with each other and became inseparable companions. The princess vowed before the King that she would not marry any prince but only to become the wife of the blind watchman of the orchard. The King did not wish to go against the wishes of his daughter and thus the princess and *Kalyāṇakārī* were married.

A painting at Mogao depicts the first half of the story. There are over thirty scenes revolving around the contrasting characters between *Kalyāṇakārī* and *Aghakārī*. Good and evil, however, are interpreted by different classes. *Kalyāṇakārī* is the embodiment of Buddhist good. In his view, destitution and disease are conditions resulting from one's own karma. Hunting and fishing are sinful acts: as he observed, "killing lives to feed oneself will accumulate sin and invite unthinkable retribution." His solution to resolve social contradictions was to beg for the blessings of God and the benevolence of the rulers. This painting is only partially done. There is a lot of space which the artists have not filled up. The painting ends with Prince *Kalyāṇakārī*'s love marriage after he has gone through all the perils of life. This does not tally with the original concept of the scripture.

(11) *Sāmaka's filial piety*.<sup>32</sup> In the state of Kapilavastu there lived a blind couple with a son named Sāmaka who embodied the virtue of filial piety and practised ten good deeds. When he grew up he followed his parents to the mountains to cultivate spiritual values. He built a straw hut to live in and fed his parents with wild fruits and spring water. One day the King of Kapilavastu went to the forests to hunt and chased a herd of deer along a stream. Sāmaka (who wore deerskin) had come to fetch water at the side of the stream; the King shot him, mistaking him for a deer. Sāmaka cried in agony, "This arrow has killed three persons." When the King heard the cry and came to Sāmaka, he was told that they had been in the forest for twenty years. The King cursed himself, found the blind parents, told them about what had happened and led them to where Sāmaka was lying. The blind parents arrived only to find him dead. They cried over the dead body and were too grief-stricken to live. Sāmaka's filial piety moved both heaven and earth. The god of heaven fed elixir into Sāmaka's mouth and the poisonous arrow dropped from his body. He was resurrected.

The story that we have painted at Mogao has been developed into several scenes. The final scene which shows the blind parents embracing their son's body and wailing in anguish represents poignantly the grief of parting. The tragic tale ends on a happy note with the solution of Buddha's magical power resurrecting Sāmaka.

The painting composed is tightly structured with a clear focus on the theme. People's activities are interwoven with the landscape --- hills, trees and the stream --- making it a realistic representation. The whole picture is steeped in feudal ideas of loyalty and filial piety. When the King is repenting for his mistake Sāmaka tells him, "You have not done any wrong. All this is destined."

(12) *Sushānti feeding his parents with his own flesh*.<sup>33</sup> The scripture says that the King of Teyishili state had ten sons, each ruling a sub-kingdom. Meanwhile, the usurper Rāhu assassinated the King. After enthroning himself, he sent troops to wipe out the ten princes. The King's youngest son Sasthiti ruled the

farthest domain. One day a Yaksha appeared and informed him that the usurper Rāhu had sent troops to vanquish him. Sasthiti hurriedly fled with his wife and son with food enough to last them seven days. They fled in a wrong direction to a place where they could not get food. Being without food for seven days, Sasthiti wanted to kill his wife so that he and his son could stay alive for the period. The son, *Sushānti*, saw his father drawing out his sword to kill his mother, he beseeched him, "Do not harm my mother. I am willing to feed both of you with my flesh so that you may reach safely." *Sushānti* cut off three portions from his own body daily to feed them and himself. The King of the neighbouring state received them and was moved by the son's filial piety. He despatched his troops to vanquish Rāhu and instated *Sushānti* as King in his own state.

We have a painting of this story at Mogao composed of seven or eight sequences describing the Yakṣa bringing the news, King Sasthiti fleeing with his wife and son, going in the wrong direction, the King wanting to kill his wife, the son offering his own flesh, the neighbouring King receiving them and sending troops to recover the kingdom for them. All the sequences are strung together naturally with special focus on the Prince's cutting his own flesh to offer to his parents. Thus this story was used to illustrate how the filial piety may enable one to recover lost territory.

Although the Northern Zhou Dynasty was the regime of the Xianbei nationality, it advocated Confucianism exactly as in "heartland" China. Zhou Emperor Wu held Confucianism as the first religion followed by Taoism and Buddhism in order of merit. He considered that etiquette, righteousness, loyalty and filial piety constitute proper behaviour in life.<sup>34</sup> Indebtedness to parents was profound and the national law did not permit even a monk to defy it. He even excommunicated monks so that they might return home to perform acts of filial piety. Among the murals of Northern Zhou, we see three paintings depicting the theme of loyalty to the King and filial piety to the parents. This was not unconnected with the advocacy of Confucian ideology.

The paintings of the above-mentioned stories are composed either as single paintings or group paintings, or in comic-strip patterns. These are done both with pictures and inscriptions. This two-in-one combination has inherited and developed Chinese painting tradition of the Han and Jin Dynasties in what is known as "painting on the left and writing on the right".

The majority of the story paintings of the early period emphasize the central theme of "enduring humiliation and sacrificing life" with illustrations of tragic scenes, such as parting in life, bereavement by death, drowning, burning, snake bite, being devoured by the wolf, stabbing oneself, jumping from a cliff, gouging out the eyes, driving nails onto the body, beheading, being buried alive, being fried alive, etcetera. The appearance of these scenes in large numbers was not accidental. The Northern and Southern Dynasties were times of secessionist regimes, frequent wars, exorbitant taxation, excessive corvee, with "corpses covering the plains and skeletons piling up as high as mountains". The paintings are but reflections of such historical realities.

Besides the above-mentioned scenes of horror and misery, we see also depictions of actual life, such as people tilling, hunting, fishing, slaughtering, building stupas and temples, digging wells for water, watering the camels, driving vehicles. Also shown are the cavalry in action and people drawing water, gathering fruits, shooting targets, boxing, ferrying, curing illness, reading, greeting relatives and playing music and dancing, besides scenes of divination, courtly consultations in palaces, journeys in sedan chairs, traffic of foreign traders and so on. These mirror with objectivity and vividness certain facets of the actual social life of that time. Therefore these paintings are not only art but are also historical records.

### 3. Mythological Themes



Cave No. 285, Western Wei



Cave No. 285, Western Wei



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

Paintings of Chinese traditional mythological themes are drawn on the ceiling of Cave Nos. 249 and 285. The centre of the ceiling is in the form of an inverted dipper. Painted on the top of the four slopes are celestial clouds symbolizing Heaven, while the lower portions are painted with mountains, forests, wild animals, symbolizing earth. Thus a canvas of spatial expanse is created. On the southern slope of Cave No. 249 is painted a chariot drawn by three phoenixes. In the chariot is seated a goddess with a top knot, wearing a loose-sleeved long gown with the carriage driver holding the reins, standing beside her. This is goddess Xiwangmu. On the northern slope is painted a chariot drawn by four dragons. Seated in the chariot is a god, wearing a high crown and a loose-sleeved long gown, also accompanied by a coach driver holding the reins. This is god Dongwanggong. Both chariots have double-layered canopies with a pilot riding either on a dragon or on a phoenix carrying a flag in hand. Winged fish escort the chariots followed by the human-headed and dragon-bodied "Kaiming" and other celestial animals in the rear, making an impressive entourage.

On the east slope of Cave No. 285 are painted Fuxi and Nuwa facing each other, both with a human head and snake body. Their hair is tied up and they wear cross-collared, large-sleeved short dresses. On their chests are drawn a sun and a moon respectively. They both have a scarf draped on their shoulders. In one hand Fuxi holds a square and in the other he holds the carpenter's inkmark. Nuwa holds a pair of dividers in her raised hands. Her sleeves flutter in the wind as she moves briskly. Besides the two, there are a number of celestial animals like "Xuanwu" which is a couple of tortoise and snake, the "white tiger" (*baihu*) galloping with its head held high, and the "red bird" (*zhuque*) flapping its wings. These in addition to "blue dragon" (*qinglong*) are the Chinese guardian angels of the four directions. There is the Thunder God (*Leigong*) gyrating to his drumbeat, the Lightning God (*Pidian*) wielding his anvil, and a Feilian with the head of a deer and wings on its back and the bird-taloned Rain God (*Yushi*) spurting clouds and mist from his mouth. These are "nature gods" of ancient Chinese mythology. In addition, there are "yuqiang" with a human head and a bird's body, "wuhuo" with an animal head and human body, and "yuren" with vertical ears and feathered arms, flying together with the celestial cranes amidst the coloured clouds.

On the lower rim skirting the ceiling slopes is painted a mountainous landscape in which we see all kinds of wild animals: a galloping wild bull, a yellow goat drinking water, a howling white bear, a wild bear with its young one, a climbing monkey, a frightened deer, a hungry tiger, and a horse tethered to the tree, in addition to human activities of tiger-shooting, sheep-chasing, sheep and boar-slaughtering, bull-hunting, etc. This genre of painting was referred to long ago by Qu Yuan (389?-278? B.C.) in his poem "Tianwen" (Dialogue with Heaven) as the symbols of universe. Wang Yi said that Qu Yuan's "Tianwen" was inspired by the murals in the temples and ancestral halls which showed "Heaven and



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

earth, mountains, rivers, springs, sages, saints and goblins and their activities". Wang Yanshou's poem on the Lingguang palace of Shandong alluded to a similar representation:

Heaven and Earth are seen  
In the palace mural paintings.  
Innumerable living beings  
With various species in between.  
Feasting one's eyes on the ordinary  
Plus things extraordinary,  
Mountain deity on territory  
And ocean spirits for company...  
Tracing even to primitive times  
Flying dragons in five lines,  
Fuxi dancing with shining scales  
And Nuwa's snake waist and tail.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

These paintings have been destroyed along with the ancient buildings which had housed them. However, many vivid legendary images/dunhuang have come to light from ancient graves such as the exotic animals on the silk paintings unearthed from the Han grave No. 1 at Mawangdui, in Changsha; Fuxi and Nuwa in the mural painting in Pu Qianqiu's graveyard in Luoyang; reliefs of god Dongwanggong and goddess Xiwangmu in the Han brick designs and stone carvings; the figures of the four gods and that of Fuxi and Nuwa in the murals in the tombs of Wei and Jin which were recently unearthed in the Hexi region. Particularly in the case of the tomb murals of the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms which have been discovered at Dingjiazha at Jiuquan in recent years, the ceilings are shaped like an inverted dipper and in the centre are caissons with open-petalled lotus designs. Dongwanggong and Xiwangmu are painted on the east and west slopes of the ceiling, while the north and west slopes of the ceiling are painted with celestial animals and yuren (winged angels). In the lower part of the ceiling is a rim covered by paintings of landscape and wild animals. The construction of the tomb chambers and the layout and the contents of the murals closely resemble those of the ceilings in Cave Nos. 249 and 285 in Dunhuang. The discovery is a convincing proof that the traditional mythological paintings of Dunhuang murals are closely related to the tomb murals in neighbouring areas.

Such traditional mythological paintings extending from the ancestral halls and palaces into the tomb chambers have already lost their original mythological significance and merely represent the celestial beings guarding the peace and tranquillity of the dead, or leading the dead to ascend Heaven. In Cave No. 290 in the painting of the life story of Buddha, the figures of celestial ushers riding the phoenix and holding a staff are painted on the carriage of the coffin. Such celestial ushers are painted in large numbers in Cave Nos. 249 and 285. Here we have an instance of "Sino-Western synthesis" --- of local mythological themes merging with Buddhist stories in the Dunhuang murals. On the west slope of Cave No. 249 is a bare-bodied four-eyed Asura holding the sun and moon in his hands. Behind him is the lofty

Mount Sumeru. On its peak is a "celestial city" with imposing walls and a half-opened gate. This is the 'Trayastrimsa Devapura' of Buddhism. The *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-Sūtra* says that if a person copies Buddhist scriptures with pious dedication he is reborn in the Heaven of Trayastrimsa. The Buddhist "devapura" taking the place of the Taoist "celestial jade palace" at Dunhuang was a parallel development of the gathering in the Tomb chambers during the Southern Dynasties of the traditional Chinese guardian angels, "winged angel riding the dragon", "winged angel playing with the tiger" along with the Buddhist flying figures, celestial musicians, lotuses, etc., synthesizing the Taoist "ascending to Heaven after becoming a winged immortal" with the Buddhist "Sukhāvati of Heavenly bliss". This truly reflects China's "nationalization" merging with Taoist and Confucian ideologies during the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties.

#### 4. Decorative Designs



Chessboard design from the ceiling, Cave No. 268, Northern Liang,

These comprise chiefly the chessboard designs and the caisson both of which were ceiling decorations in ancient Chinese architecture. Cave No. 268 is adorned by clay-moulded chessboard designs identical to the chessboard designs on stone carvings of Han tombs unearthed from Yi'nan county in Shandong. Both these designs trace their origin to early wooden structures. Caisson was originally the decorative courtyard design in the ancient Chinese palace architecture. The name "zaojing" (caisson) is derived from the combination of crossbeams forming a jing (well-like pattern) and the zao (colourful) designs painted on the wooden beams. A "zaojing" may be described as "the ceiling of a mansion with either a round fountain or square well-pattern with lotus decoration". Cave No. 272 is the first among the Mogao Grottoes to have an ornamental caisson. Whether it is a chessboard pattern or caisson, there is the design of a suspended lotus from the centre of the square. This is the "inverted lotus" pattern in architecture.

During the last days of Northern Wei, caisson was transformed into a canopy, the umbrella of the emperors, dukes and courtiers. Buddhism in China was influenced by feudal style and content. As early as the Han Dynasty it was already in vogue to "use the canopy to pay homage to Buddha and Laozi". The ornamental ceiling in Cave No. 285 is a typical canopy in Han style. Besides the suspended lotus in the centre, the boundary rim is decorated with designs of the lonicera plant, cloud, flame, coloured bell and hanging curtain. Suspended from the four corners are decorations of animal faces, pendant jade, tassels and bird feathers, virtually an illustration of the line "Lofty canopy adorned with leaves, jade and feather" in the famous poem "Dongjingfu" (Rhyming on the Eastern Capital). This is the first innovation at Mogao in decorative art which conforms to Chinese tradition.

Besides the caisson ceiling and the chessboard design, there are also the decorative niche lintels and borders and designs in between the rafters. Although the patterns may vary, the lines are the same. The lines are mainly made up of drawings of lotus, lonicera, cloud, flame, meteoroids, chessboard, birds and animals, supernatural beings and flying figures, etc. The lotus is an ancient decorative design of China. During the Spring and Autumn period, we find the blossoming lotus design engraved on bronze kettles with lotus and crane designs. Han



Cave No. 249, Western Wei



Male Donors, Cave No. 288, Western Wei

tomb murals have been adorned with lotus designs on the caisson. This proves that the lotus had been extensively used in China even before the advent of Buddhist art. Buddhism has also used the lotus as the symbol of Sukhavati. Therefore the development of Buddhist art gave an additional impetus to the lotus designs, enriching both their composition and colouring. At Dunhuang, the lotus becomes an indispensable element of design during all the dynasties.

The lonicera design is a variation of the plant. The earliest lonicera design is seen in the tomb mural paintings in Pu Qianqiu's grave in Luoyang, where it is drawn amid the clouds. The screens excavated from the graves of the Eastern Han Dynasty at Wuwei are also adorned with the lonicera design which has also been embroidered on the silk fabrics excavated from the graves of Eastern Han at Minfeng. From the time of the Western and Eastern Jin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the lonicera became one of the main decorative designs in the Buddhist caves. The early caves of Dunhuang were virtually the domain of lonicera designs, a phenomenon which lasted from the Sixteen Kingdoms until the early Tang when it was gradually replaced by new designs. By skilfully moderating the aesthetic laws of repetition, continuity, symmetry, balance and unity in variety, and combining dynamism with tranquillity, the ancient craftsmen manipulated the three blades of lonicera leaves into a variety of border decorations: undulated, circular, square, rhombus, heart-shape and turtle-back shape, into creeping and tendrilled vines and into the floral background for creating space for representations of pigeons, parrots, peacocks and ostriches. The lonicera is even interwoven with lotus to form free patterns and to become the backdrop for the celestial musicians. In brief, the use of the lonicera shows a simple theme being made up to a rich and colourful picture, giving play to the Chinese mastery of highlighting primary objects, with exquisite characterization, clever variations and lucid colouring. The effect is one of sobriety and earnestness, greatly enriching the contents and forms of China's decorative art.

## 5. Portraits of the Donors



Horse trainer, Cave No. 290, Northern Zhou

The portrayal of the donors falls into the genre of human portraits. In the early caves such portraits do not assume much importance; in general they are painted below the main themes and arranged in a row numbering more than ten at a minimum, and several hundreds or even a thousand at the most. Cave No. 428 of Northern Zhou is crowded with the portraits of twelve hundred donors, each portrait has an inscription on the side informing us of the donors' native places.

The portraits of the donors are the portrayal of historical personalities and are also the record of religious philanthropy. The large number of such portrayals with several tens, even a hundred figures painted at

one

time made it necessary to bank on stereotypes, mainly to distinguish the nationality, social status and religious devotion of these donors. Although all the portraits are accompanied by the inscription of their names, they do not reflect the actual features of the persons concerned. This is rather the tendency of a "thousand portraits with the same face".

Among the donors of the early period there are a large number of monks whose portraits enshrine the caves. There are also quite a few portraits of aristocratic families and their retinue of servants and slaves. We also see many portraits of other nationalities.

In a row of donors, the portraits of monks are always painted at the head. This was probably due to the importance of religious life at that time. The portraits of aristocrats are placed prominently accompanied by the portraits of servants and slaves. Cave No. 288 has two portraits of donors. The male donor wears a high crown and a long gown with loose sleeves, with a rounded collar and a white linen jacket and a knee-length garment around the waist. He wears raised-tip wooden high-heel shoes, and his long gown spreads to the floor. Behind him are pages and servants holding his things while attendants lifting screen fans and an umbrella. All the slaves and servants wear shirts and trousers. The female donor has her hair coiled into a top knot. She is wearing loose-sleeved shirt and a long multi-coloured skirt. In front of her is a maid carrying fresh flowers. Behind her is another maid carrying a screen fan to shield her from sun and wind. Although the names in the inscriptions have already disappeared we can still establish their high aristocratic ranking from their attire and the size of their retinue.

Cave No. 285 shows several portraits of foreign nationalities wearing felt hats, shirts and trousers, with a leather belt girding their waists on which are hung daily implements like waterpot, rope, flint stone, knife and so on. Some have a short queue hanging at the back of their head. The inscriptions have revealed foreign names like "Huheinu", "Yin'an'gui", "Shichongji", etc. A large number are of the Xianbei nationality, with tiny figures and interesting expressions.



Worth noticing is a foreign horse trainer in Cave No. 290. He has sharp nose and big eyes and is wearing a white felt hat and a tight-sleeved shirt and wears long boots. He holds the reins in one hand and the whip in another. His eyes focus on the red horse which is yet to be trained. The horse retreats with timidity in front of this experienced trainer; it is the artist's intention to illustrate the foreign horseman's determination and courage.

Cave No. 196, Northern Zhou

During Northern Zhou, the portraits of donors were more richly depicted. In Cave No. 297, there is a scene of music and dance in the bower. Among the musical instruments are the lute, harp and flute. Two female dancers are seen in action swinging their waists and waving their hands, jumping and turning to and fro. It can be seen from the musical instruments as well as the dance postures that the music was in foreign tunes and the dance was in a foreign style prevalent in Hexi region in those days. These musicians and dancers were not the donors but they carried the "offerings" of the donors to Buddha.

The portraits of donors are not merely works of art but also source of important historical data. The inscriptions provide a large number of historical clues. The attires shown in painting were the real costumes of historical personalities, thus they are an important source of information for the study of



historical costumes, as it is said: "Commoners of the past have never been lost."<sup>35</sup>

Although the cave art of Dunhuang germinated from an imported seed, its growth was on Chinese soil, having been nursed by the rain and sunshine of the traditional culture of China, and blossoming into magnificent flowers. It imbibed distinct and unmistakable Chinese characteristics from its birth.

First, it maintains the excellent Chinese art tradition of creating figures with lines or contours. Line drawing possesses a high degree of highlighting ability. Authentic and lively human figures with characterization are the products of vigorous and experienced ink strokes.

The line drawings of the early murals grew from the paintings of Han and Jin. The contours are drawn by thick and powerful lines and earth-red colouring is done only after the head, body and the limbs are outlined. A final touch is added by a black ink finish. As the murals in the caves are meant to be on permanent view for the devotees and to even draw the viewers through the medium of art to believe in the teachings of Buddha, they are executed with greater care and effort than the murals in the tombs. Therefore, after colouring, the artist caps his creations by a round of execution of final lines to reveal the physique as well as the mental outlook of the figures.

Line drawing in the murals of early period is like a "spring silkworm spinning its silk fibre", elegant, forceful and rounded, appropriate for drawing calm, tender and affectionate characters. Line drawings in Cave Nos. 272 and 263 are typical examples revealing a mastery of skills which has nearly attained the degree of "highest purity". In the last years of the Northern Dynasties the mural paintings have acquired a dynamic element; correspondingly, line drawing also gets innovated. Strokes are now executed with increased pressure and speed. Winding long lines with a definite direction are drawn with such rapidity so as to resemble "the sweeping gale and flashing lightning". Zhang Huaiguan's comment on the painting of Lu Tanwei aptly describes this process: "The master employs magic and deftness. His brush moves with vigour as if it is the tip of a knife."<sup>36</sup> After Lu Tanwei's school of "elegant bones and handsome looks" was introduced to Dunhuang, the line drawing at Mogao acquired a great vigour and freedom and was enriched with the rhythm of dynamism.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

Characterization by means of line drawing is the realization of the aesthetic concept of "illustrating the spirit by means of form". There are two kinds of characterization of the early Dunhuang arts. One kind includes the deities with a large imaginative component shrouded in religious mystery. The other which comprises the human beings of the mundane world is more realistic and full of life.



Cave No. 249, Western Wei

Characterization in the Mogao paintings pays close attention to the figures. Status is in-built in a figure be it that of a deity or of a human being. The characterization of Buddha adheres strictly to the scriptures, with a frontal view, solemn and sacred, and textbook mudrās and sitting postures. Bodhisattvas are generally shown in profile with variations in elegant and handsome postures. The majority of foreigners are shown in profile, probably because of their mean social status and also because it is easy to highlight their high noses and deep set eyes.

Attention is also paid to the proportions and positions of the human body. Changes occur frequently in the proportions of the portraits of the early period: that between head and body moves from the ratio of 1:4 to

1:6 and 1:7. As a result, the Bodhisattva's figure becomes slimmer and more beautiful. The dancing postures of the flying figures appear to be increasingly enchanting. The exaggeration of proportions of the body reaches its peak during Western Wei. The fingers and toes of Bodhisattvas are made particularly beautiful with elongated finger joints and graceful hand gestures much beyond physiological reality. The principles of "exaggeration in restraint" and "ornamentation without falsehood" influence these changes and therefore aesthetic beauty is only reinforced. The Bodhisattva by the side of the altar of Cave No. 249 has a head-body proportion of 1:7, with lithe limbs and a shy expression: the total effect is one of warmth, tenderness and enchantment. The characterization in the illustration of the "Deer Jātaka" in Cave No. 257 shows the deer with a curved neck, long slender body with its legs suggesting abundant vigour, again in excess of the actual physiology. Yet the style conformed with the scientific laws of aesthetic exaggeration and imagination, as a result we feel that the quick-footed white and green horses with their elegant character have come alive and emerged out of the flat surface of characterization of deities. In his chapter on "Shensi" (Imagination) in *Wenxin Diaolong* (Carving out a dragon from the literary heart), Liu Xie said that "Freezing one's mind in tranquillity, one's thought can connect a thousand years; moving one's face in silence, one's vision can travel ten thousand miles." This is describing the workings of the imagination, what Gu Kaizhi described as "transposition". "By transposition one attains sophistication" was the essence of Gu Kaizhi's aesthetic concept. This idea is embodied in the art of Dunhuang in the early period, resulting in the creation of supernatural images/dunhuang. On the ceiling of Cave Nos. 249 and 285, we see a kaiming which is a dragon with nine human heads, and Fuxi and Nuwa, the human figures with snake-bodies, with sun and moon on their chests; the Thunder God which has a beast head, a human body and bird's claws spinning with the drum; the yuqiang which has a human head and a bird's body, all moving in cosmic space. Such mythological creatures are all the products of "imagination" and "imagination in aid of the pursuit of conquering, dominating and transforming nature into images/dunhuang".<sup>37</sup> Among the murals of Dunhuang, the peak of crystallization of the imagination was the flying figures. The early flying figures do not have wings, nor do they ascend the clouds. They rely on the movements of two scarves to create the feeling of

Let each feather exert and let me fly  
To reach the celestial palace over the clouds.<sup>38</sup>

The flying figures are an all-out beautification of the angels: the gods bring happiness to men by playing music, spraying them with fragrance and showering petals.

However, in the treatment of another category of figures, like Mara's daughters and fighters in the illustration of "Māra Vijaya", the Mogao artists have shown them as figures with the heads of beasts with red eyebrows and green eyes, with abdomen as head, breasts as eyes, the navel as a mouth. They have been transformed into skeletons, spitting fire, and in grotesque shapes, looking both ugly and ferocious. These are instances of extreme distortions of the negative characters in Buddhism, to bring out the contrast between good and evil. As has been well said by the literary critic, Wang Chong, "When you want to praise a person, you cannot make him happy if you do not use superlatives for good; when you want to vilify a person, you cannot make others hate him if you do not play up his wickedness."<sup>39</sup> The early art of Dunhuang made full use of this aesthetic theory.



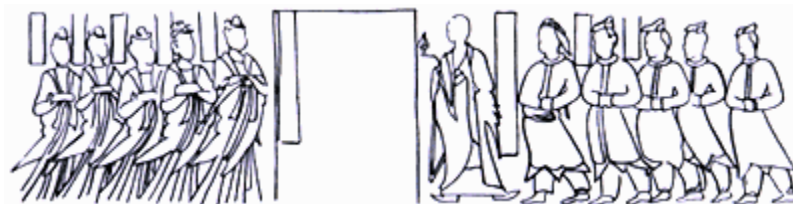
Standing Bodhisattvas, Cave No. 290, Northern Wei

The ultimate objective of image-making is to capture the sentiments, i.e., to give life and soul to the artistic images/dunhuang. The sentiment of the images/dunhuang is mainly expressed by the face. Lu Ji observed, "If the appearance is to be faithful, the change of colours is an indication."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, in both the stucco and mural of Dunhuang, special attention is paid to the creation of the head. Most of the stucco heads of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are separately made before being fitted in the caves. This is why they are such good pieces of art. In the murals, particular attention is paid to the portrayal of the face. But it is the eyes which play the key role in expressing inner thoughts and feelings. Gu Kaizhi had felt quite strongly about this when he said, "It is easy for the hand to manipulate the harp but to make the eyes bid farewell to the geese is rather difficult." Liu Bing, a Dunhuang scholar of the same time, also observed that "Minute indications of sentiments appear in the face; it is the eyes that tell the inner feelings." Again, "eyes are the index of the heart and reflect what the heart feels."<sup>41</sup> He thoroughly explored the relationship between the heart and the eyes, and developed Gu Kaizhi's idea of expression of sentiments.

From the very beginning, Dunhuang art started paying attention to the expression of inner feelings through the eyes and eyebrows. The Dunhuang artists accumulated rich experience from long period of practice and created a set of patterns to express happiness, anger, grief and joy. These patterns help the artists to create types of images/dunhuang and implant characters to these images/dunhuang. Thus we have the tenderness and solemnity of the Bodhisattvas, the power and heroic spirit of the Lokapālas, the devotion and respect of the donors, the freedom and vivacity of the flying figures and celestial musicians and so on. Even among the same category, the expressions of the figures are not stereotyped. Thus for example, the stucco Bodhisattva in Cave No. 260 is seen bending forward, with eyes cast down in deep meditation, while the Bodhisattva in Cave No. 290 is tender and enchanting with a lovely smile. In the murals the Bodhisattvas of Cave No. 285 are just the opposite--carefree, candid and sanguine, smiling broadly. Naturally, even the same category of figures can have different moods and sentiments.

Dunhuang cave art of the early period gradually created a brand new national style corresponding to the characteristics of the times because of the inheritance of the fine artistic tradition of the line drawing and characterization and the absorption of the beneficial factors of foreign art.

The early Dunhuang art went through four historical periods. Due to changes in politics, economics, ideology and aesthetic ideals during different periods, and due to the improvement of artistic skills, the artistic styles of these periods also show their peculiarities.



Cave No. 285, Western Wei

During the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms and the early years of Northern Wei, Mogao art is simple in content, crude in characterization, unsophisticated in colouring, forceful in line drawing, proportionate to the physiology of figures, with roundish and plump faces, and solemn, calm and indifferent moods. Bodhisattvas generally wear bejewelled crowns, with a half-naked upper body covered by a scarf and

long dhoti below the waist, still retaining the tradition of the costumes and decorations of the Western Regions, India and Persia. With the addition of the three-dimensional technique in colouring creating the effect of light and shade and the ochre-red background producing a tonal warmth and earnestness, an utterly new art scenario, form and style have arrived in total contrast with the art of the Wei and Jin Dynasties. As this new art style was clearly influenced by the Buddhist art of the Western Regions, we may call it the Western style. The years of Northern Wei after Emperor Xiaowen's reforms during the Taihe Era (477-499), coming down to particularly Western Wei, new themes of traditional Chinese mythology infiltrated into the cave art, breaking through the conventional ochre background and its warm and tranquil tonal expressions to create a bright, clear and lucid mood bubbling with liveliness. We see especially the appearance of figures whose faces are sharp and skinny, with sanguine expressions of the eyes, and a broad smile, dress flying in the air, etc., creating a carefree and romantic style. Such a style originated from interior China and can be called the Chinese "heartland" style.

Both these styles co-existed in the caves of the last years of Northern Wei, Western Wei and Northern Zhou. Cave No. 285 of the Western Wei is a typical example. On the west wall we see the conventional style of the Western Regions, unsophisticated and restrained, with movements that epitomise tranquillity.

On the north, south and east walls we see the unrestrained and romantic style of the Chinese "heartland", figures flying and vibrating with animation. On the ceiling there is a mixture of both the styles gradually integrating with each other.

During Northern Zhou, following the integration of nationalities in the north and cultural exchanges between north and south China, the two distinctive artistic styles co-existed and began to merge into each other. In characterization, the well-shaped and handsome facial features of the Chinese "heartland" style integrated with the Western style of rounded and plump faces to produce the new image of "short and colourful faces".

In colouring, the "heartland" style integrated with the Western style of juxtaposing light and shade to produce a new three-dimensional colouring. In highlighting the sentiments of the characters, the simple and unsophisticated combined with the carefree and romantic to produce a new image of warmth, tenderness and elegance, imbued with inner liveliness and vitality. The stuccoes and murals showed deeper social awareness and a vivacity which was the hallmark of the new art style of Northern Zhou.

The two different styles of the early Dunhuang art had their respective social foundations. The Western style was mainly a copy of Kuca cave art, yet not its exact copy. The historical background of Dunhuang and the ideological trend and aesthetic ideals of those times contributed to the style as well. After the disintegration of Western Jin, "heartland" China witnessed much turmoil and confusion. Liangzhou became the well-known "haven for war refugees". Thousands of families migrated from the "heartland" to Jiuqian and Dunhuang. Litterateurs and scholars also swarmed into Liangzhou "to find a pillar to lean upon" for the time being. Thus the feudal culture of the "heartland", particularly the Confucian ideology prevailed in Hexi region, extending even to Gaochang. Liangzhou was then the economic and cultural centre of the Hexi region, while the Confucian scholarship of Liangzhou came mainly from Dunhuang. Song Yao, Zhang Zhen, Kan Yin, Suo Chang and Liu Bing were all famed exponents of Confucianism from Dunhuang. Liu Bing, in particular, was proclaimed as the "profound scholar of Hexi". Another scholar, Li Hao, was known to have a "comprehensive mastery over canonical and historical texts" and "competence in literature". After he became the Duke of Liang, he built the Hall of Obedience, Hall of Virtue and Hall of Reception outside the southern gate of Dunhuang city: in all of these there were "murals eulogising sage-kings, loyal subjects, filial sons, martyrs and chaste women in historical times, using model examples for inspiration and admonition. All the civilian and military heroes were Chinese."<sup>42</sup> The halls were constructed entirely after the architectural style of "Hall of Enlightenment" of Chinese imperial palaces. The large number of Confucian classics unearthed from Dunhuang and Turfan, the tomb paintings of the Wei and Jin Dynasties and the Sixteen Kingdoms prove that Confucian ideology

had already taken root in the minds of the people of the area.

As the art of a foreign religion which penetrated into such a region, Dunhuang cave art could not but be influenced by the local ideology and culture, and adapt itself to the local conventions and customs in order to take root and grow. Therefore the Indian style of nude dancers and Bodhisattvas with "full breasts, slender waists and large hips" which had spread to as far as the Xinjiang area suddenly disappeared in transit to Dunhuang without a trace. In their place appeared the newly created uni-sex images/dunhuang of Bodhisattvas, flying figures and celestial musicians. This uni-sex image was in keeping with the aesthetic norms of Confucianism shedding the high degree of imagination of Buddhism; it was an important aspect of the sinicization of imported Buddhist art.



Buddha, Cave No. 259, Northern wei

Even more important is the artistic characterization at Mogao of the Bodhisattvas with dignified and solemn appearance, standing attentively in a composed and tranquil mood. There is the statue of the meditating Buddha in Cave No. 259 sitting erect in deep meditation, the eyes with a rigid look, a gentle smile emerging straight from the heart to the corner of his mouth, expressing a tranquil meditating mind. Adding a layer of simple colouring and rounded contour lines, an unadulterated decorative beauty is created. The Bodhisattva inside the niche of Cave No. 272 has his head lowered in deep thought and has a sincere and tranquil look on his face. Harmonious, solemn and tranquil characterization of this kind embodies the commonality between Buddhism and Confucianism.

Buddhism propagated 'Benevolence', hence Buddha is called the "Benevolent One" in the scriptures. Confucius propounded the "doctrine of Benevolence" and a virtuous person is known in Confucianism as a "benevolent man". Buddhism advocates "freedom from desire and happiness in tranquillity".<sup>43</sup> The Confucian Lunyu (Analects) quotes the Master as saying that "The sagacious is animated, while the virtuous is tranquil." Hence "Benevolence" and "Tranquillity" are the common norms for self-cultivation. In his annotations to *Renwu zhi* (Book of Personalities), the Dunhuang scholar, Liu Bing, vigorously expounded the Confucian moral cultivation starting from spirit, bones and muscles to appearance and countenance, including even the manner of speech, so as to conform to certain norms. In short, a man must be "simple in nature, upright within and candid without, with a pure voice and pleasant looks, rightful conduct and correct countenance", with a final requirement of possessing "warm and tender looks".

The early art of Dunhuang was deeply influenced by such guidelines. The content and style of Dunhuang art has been, in varying degrees, stamped with the imprint of Confucian ideology. Hence the Western style acquired strong characteristics native to Dunhuang.

The Chinese "heartland" style originated from the style of painting created by Gu Kaizhi and Dai Kui during the Southern Dynasties and culminated in the "well-shaped and handsome face" of Lu Tanwei's style. It grew on the foundation of the lifestyle, state of mind and aesthetic ideals of the upper class of the Wei, Jin and Southern Dynasties. Rich households and litterateurs in South China enjoyed official power and had large incomes, large manors and innumerable serfs, and were able to lead an extravagant and frivolous life. They indulged in tonics and alcohol, in idle rhyming and the practice of immorality, and wearing loose robes and arrogated to themselves a style of aloofness. The *Shishuo Xinyu* (New Version of the World) and *Jinshu* (Annals of Jin) exalted such a lifestyle. An observation about Ruan Ji reads:

"Arrogant and independent, impulsive and unrestrained." And about Ruan Zhan: "There is harmony in his spirit, mankind has no place in his mind. His demeanour is outstanding and indifferent, and his countenance leisurely and at ease." About Ji Kang we are told: "A seven feet tall physique", "a handsome and graceful bearing", "tranquil and free from desires", "aloof and outstanding." Then, about Lu Ji: "elegant in style and highbrow in his mood." About Dai Kui: "sage-like in his youth, tranquil and competent", as well as "pure and admirable as wind". These were indicators of the high society style, concentrating on a carefree aloofness, as if they were immortal fairies rather than mortals. The thin body was the symbol of beauty. Wang Gong was eulogized as "a willow in spring moonlight".<sup>44</sup> The rage for a skinny body verged on absurdity. Thus, it is recorded in *Jinshu* that Wang Wan, son of Wang Rong, one of the seven renowned recluses, "had a beautiful name but was too fat". This was not to the liking of the father who fed bran to the son in order to thin him down. The result was contrary to the intended objective, feeding him bran made the son grow "even fatter".<sup>45</sup> During the Liang Dynasty the upper class carried this trend further by insisting on "comfortable dress and loose belts", "large hat and high-heeled shoes", "scented clothes" and "a shaven and powdered face".<sup>46</sup> The men were weak and fragile and served as the background for the style of the "well-shaped and handsome face". Such a style prevailed all over China, uniting north and south during the last years of Northern Wei.



Cave No. 275, Northern Liang

The Jātaka story paintings at Kuca were transformed into the Han painting style of "the left showing the paintings and the right narrating the story". The Śibi Jātaka story in Cave No. 275 of Dunhuang is an exact copy of Śibi Jātaka in the second cave of Tuyugou. Similar is the case of "Sattva feeding himself to the tigress". The Kizil painting shows a foreign prince lying on the ground being greedily devoured by a hungry tigress. In the early Dunhuang caves more details were added; the main character, however, is still a copy of that of the Kuca mural. At Kizil, on the two sides of the domed ceiling are painted the Sun and Moon gods of the West, riding chariots drawn by four horses. We have the same imagery in Cave No. 285 at Dunhuang of the Western Wei vintage, almost identical to the Kuca murals. It can be seen that the Sun and Moon gods, popular in Greece, Rome, Persia and India, have migrated to Dunhuang through Buddhist art, and merged later with China's native Sun and Moon gods and co-exist with Fuxi and Nuwa in the same cave, albeit they were totally different in artistic imagination and aesthetic style.

The Dunhuang methods of characterization or of expressing sentiments are quite akin to the Buddhist art of the Western Regions. The Kizil portraits of Bodhisattvas have round and plump faces, straight nose and small eyes; these appear right in the centre of the face. Their bodies are quite dwarfish, fat and hefty

while their expressions tranquil and indifferent. Among them are naked and semi-naked figures of Bodhisattvas, celestial musicians and flying figures of Indian style with full breasts, slender waists and heavy buttocks. Although we do not see such figures at Dunhuang, the early figures of the Sixteen Kingdoms and the early years of the Northern Wei have maintained the principal features of characterization and sentiments of the Buddhist art of the Western Regions.

The Dunhuang murals, specially the painting of characters, have learnt from India the skill of highlighting light and shade, i.e., painting layer after layer of red and using the white powder to highlight the bridge of the nose, eyes and the bridge. This was known as "aotufa" (three-dimensional method) in the history of painting. Various nationalities of the Western Regions internalized this method and created innovative methods of one-side colouring and two-sides colouring, creating their own distinctive styles. The Dunhuang murals have taken over such colouring methods and standardized them; they prevailed for more than 160 years in grottoes of Hexi region.

The costumes of the Bodhisattvas and Devakanyas and the kings, princes as well as of the rich people in the stories, are generally as follows: jewel-studded crowns on the head, a semi-naked upper body with capes and scarves, long dhotis and bare feet. Mixing up costumes and decorations of Indian and Persian styles is a regular phenomenon in all the caves of the Western Regions, and among the Dunhuang grottoes before the reformation of the Taihe era of the Northern Wei. The Queen in "The Deer King Jātaka", the daughters of Mara in "Māra Vijaya", the young girl in "Śramana observing the Sila by committing suicide", the family members in "Śibi Jātaka" and so on, all have a jewel-studded crown on their heads, a broad scarf on their shoulders and they wear half-sleeved shirts and long skirts. This sort of costumes, particularly Lady Sumati's dress, are to be found everywhere in the Kizil murals (the Kuca murals are almost identical). However, this Western costume (also known as Kuca costume) is not seen east of Dunhuang.

In short, although the Dunhuang style has acquired a local colouring, the influence from the Western Regions is multi-faceted. There is a fascinating synthesis of the Buddhist art styles of various nationalities of the Western regions, of Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia.

Coming to the Chinese "heartland" style, we can see that right from the beginning Dunhuang Buddhist art has imbibed the influences from the east. In the biography of the famous monk Dharmarakṣa of "Dunhuang Bodhisattva" fame (Western Jin) it is said, "the paintings and images/dunhuang of the monasteries are after the styles of the capital."<sup>47</sup>

It seems that there had always been Buddhist portraits from the "heartland" even before the caves came into existence in Dunhuang. But we have not yet discovered any of the ruins of the Buddhist monasteries of the Jin Dynasty in order to verify this statement. Of the two monks who were attributed to be the founders of the Mogao grottoes, Yue Zun and Fa Liang, one of them travelled from the west to this place and the other from the east. Both of them were embodiments of Buddhist monastic disciplines and examples of meditative tranquillity. Obviously this kind of meditative cultivation had already been tinged with Taoist colouring, an influence from the "heartland". But the caves hewn by Yue Zun have not been discovered up to the present time. During the last years of the Sixteen Kingdoms, Liangzhou was the centre of Buddhist activities in Hexi. Juqu Mangsun created many grottoes which are now seen at the foot of Tianti hill. They must have been a gigantic task originally, but have unfortunately suffered heavy damages due to frequent collapse from the top. Of the few caves which are extant, the earliest is a caitya type with a vajra throne. Four layers of murals are found, the innermost of which was executed during Northern Liang. The painting style is similar to that of Cave No. 275 at Dunhuang and the Northern Liang stone pagodas. We know that when Northern Wei conquered Northern Liang and Juqu Mujian fled to the west, Buddhist pagodas were to be seen all over Jiuquan, Dunhuang and Gaochang. There are inscriptions for dates such as "the first year of Chengsuan Era" (428), "the third year of Yanhe Era" (434), "the second year of Taiyuan Era" (436), "the second year of Chengyang Era" (438) and so on. The cave

art of Northern Liang could possibly influence not only Dunhuang but also Gaochang art. But the cave art of Northern Liang did not make a breakthrough in the Western style and did not alter the Dunhuang style. It was only after the Taihe Era that the Buddhist art of the "heartland" began to have its impact on Dunhuang.

The Wei Emperor, Xiaowen, moved his capital to Luoyang and carried out a policy of sinicization, making Confucian propriety the norm, employing Confucian scholars from south China to establish a system of etiquette and ceremony. He abolished many tribal practices of his ancestors, forbade the donning of Xianbei costumes and ordered Chinese costumes as the imperial uniform. He also forbade the use of the Xianbei language and made Chinese the official language.<sup>48</sup> Emperor Xiaowen energetically assimilated the culture of south China and gradually made Luoyang a prosperous centre of Confucian ceremony and etiquette and talents.<sup>49</sup> The Northern Wei Dynasty moved from strength to strength in this process.

Yuanhong, or Wei Emperor Xiaowen, proved to be an outstanding patron of Buddhism. He observed, "Our ruling ancestors have worked hard to reign but to establish an internal norm was an uphill task. There was the decision of the imperial court's exaltation of moral nobility and spirituality. Yet, enough has not been done in expounding enlightenment and accumulating merits for future life."<sup>50</sup> The Emperor often summoned eminent monks to the palace to discuss official business. He also ordered that monks got their provisions (from the donors) to preach the scriptures and disseminate dharma. Due to the encouragement of the rulers, Buddhism developed quickly in the north. Buddhist monasteries mushroomed in Luoyang to number as many as 1,367. There were more than 30,000 Buddhist shrines on Northern Wei soil and more than 2,00,000 monks and nuns.<sup>51</sup> Eminent monks from the south thronged to Wei territories and three thousand odd "Śramaṇas of numerous kingdoms" arrived with scriptures to this "Sukhāvātī" of dharma. Contacts with the western countries extended as far as Europe.<sup>52</sup> Luoyang became the Buddhist centre of China and earned the reputation of "Kingdom of Buddha". From this time onwards, Buddhist art of the "heartland" constantly expanded to the Hexi corridor and further a field to the Western Regions.

The development of Buddhism in "heartland" China was linked with the influence of the south. Not only did the tendency of the south to emphasize Buddhist philosophy spread to the north, but the Northern Wei rulers who had had a liking for Confucian classics and the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi frequently organised joint discussions between Buddhist monk scholars and their metaphysical Taoist counterparts, promoting a synthesis between Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Meanwhile, the merging of Buddhism with the belief in fairies in the south also had a continued influence on the north and travelled further along the "Silk Road" as well.

After the Taihe Era, we find that the figures have become handsome and thin, with loose robes and broad belts; a carefree, and romantic expression replaces the features of plummy faces, stout bodies and warm and tranquil moods of the early years of Northern Wei in the sculptures of Yungang and Longmen grottoes. The "well-shaped handsome face" characteristic of the Chinese "heartland" style reigned. Smiling Buddha images/dunhuang and carefree and romantic Bodhisattvas were no longer the images/dunhuang of the deities; they were substituted by the portrayal of litterateurs of Chinese "heartland" and the beauties of south China.

Around the second year of the Yanchang Era (513), the faces of Bodhisattvas in Binglingsi grottoes became long and slender but slightly squarish, with clear eyebrows, long noses and lips turning upward to the point of distortion, the style of "well-shaped and handsome faces". Among the Tianti hill grottoes in the last years of Northern Wei there also appeared slim flying figures with broad foreheads and narrow cheeks, handsome and carefree, matching the figures on the bricks of the Deng county tombs in Henan, both in figural style and in colouring.



Around the third year of the Xiaochang Era (525), figures of the "well-shaped and handsome" style appeared in the caves of Dunhuang in large numbers among the stucco images/dunhuang of Bodhisattvas, flying figures, kings, princes, ladies, courtiers, armed attendants, donors and so on, contrasting sharply with the earlier figures of the Western style: the robust versus the thin, the tranquil versus the dynamic, the naked versus the dressed, three-dimensional versus the highly decorative. The style of "well-shaped and handsome faces" belonged to the Southern Dynasties. In recent years in places like Nanjing, Danyang of Jiangsu province and in Fujian province some tombs dating from the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties have been excavated, yielding a large number of bricks which have figures engraved on them. They are composed around themes such as "The seven sages of the bamboo groves", "Mounted band", "Soldier attendant", "Winged angel playing with the dragon", "Winged angel playing with the tiger", "Ascending heaven with wings to become immortal", "Offerings to bhiksu", "Winged angel flying in heaven" and so on, which betray the style of the schools of Gu Kaizhi and Lu Tanwei. After the Taihe Era, this style of the Southern Dynasties spread to the north evoking a universal echo in the northern art. "The story of the obedient son" and the "Mounted band" in the tomb paintings of Deng county in Henan province reflect the art style of the Southern Dynasties in the tomb paintings of Chinese "heartland", and are typical examples of the style of "well-shaped and handsome faces" of the time.

The appearance of the Chinese "heartland" style among the Dunhuang caves cannot be separated from the exploits of the King of Dongyang and Duke of Jianping in propagating Buddha dharma. In the third year of the Xiaochang Era, Yuan Rong, the King of Dunhuang, assumed his duty as Dunhuang governor and landed at Dunhuang from Luoyang. Before 572 when Emperor of Northern Zhou was enthroned, Yu Yi, Duke of Jianping, arrived from "heartland" China to take up the governorship of Dunhuang. Many large caves were hewn during their reigns. In the inscription left by a Mr. Li during the reign of the Tang Empress Wu, it is stated, "Again we have a large cave excavated by the Duke of Jianping and King of Dongyang respectively. After that, common people in the province poured their resources and continued with the fashion, turning the entire place into serene rock-cut homes for the deities and a pureland for mystic spirits."<sup>53</sup> The "heartland" style brought in by the King of Dongyang and Duke of Jianping marked a significant change in the cave art of Dunhuang.

Firstly, non-Buddhist national mythological themes began cropping up among the Buddhist caves. These themes came to the caves from the stone tombs during the process of fusion between Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, further enriching the content of cave art.

Secondly, the sinicization of the Dunhuang cave art received a further boost so that we see among the images/dunhuang of Buddha and Bodhisattvas and in the illustrations of Buddhist stories the appearance of Chinese costumes, images/dunhuang of the litterateurs of south China and styles highlighting carefree and romantic moods --- all of which infuse dynamism to a tranquil environment and breaking through the boundaries of Buddhist art of the Western style is successful in creating a system of Chinese Buddhist art.

*Translated by Bagyalakshmi*

[From *Dunhuang shiku yishu lunji* (Essays on the Dunhuang Art) pp. 1-41.]

## Dunhuang Art in the First Half of the Tang Dynasty



The History of Dunhuang during the Tang Dynasty can be divided into three periods:

1. Direct control by the central government of the Tang Dynasty (618-781);
2. Tibetan occupation (781-848); and
3. Zhang Yichao's rule (848-907).

From the point of view of Dunhuang art, the first period may be regarded as the early half, while the second and third periods may be termed the second half of the Tang Dynasty.

Interior of Cave No. 27, High Tang



Cave No. 79, High Tang

The Tang Dynasty marked the hightide of economic, political and cultural development in Chinese history. It is generally accepted that the decline of the Tang Dynasty started with the rebellions of An Lushan and Shi Siming which took place in 755. The dynasty was founded by Li Yuan, i.e., Emperor Gaozu (618 -627). The twenty-three-year rule of Li Shimin, Emperor Taizong, laid a solid foundation for the dynasty. The country attained the zenith of power during the reign of Empress Wu and Emperor Xuanzong I. The first half of the Tang period of Dunhuang art corresponded approximately to this golden period.

The central government of Tang attached great importance to the strategically important area of the Hexi Corridor which controlled a vital point on the Silk Road. Minister Chu Suiliang's observation that "Hexi is the heart of China",<sup>1</sup> reflects the view of the ruling elite. No sooner had the Tang government stabilized in central China than it dispatched an expedition to the west, and annexed the areas controlled by Xue Ju (Lanzhou) and Li Gui (Liangzhou). In 624, the Centre quelled the rebellions of Zhang Hu and Li Tong at Shazhou and was in control of the entire Hexi area. In 640, General Hou Junji conquered Gaochang and brought the Western Region under the central rule, ensuring the free flow of traffic along the Silk Road. Following political and military consolidation, the central government adopted a series of forceful measures to promote agriculture and sericulture, to reclaim land for garrison troops and to fully utilize land and water resources, giving a fillip to agricultural production. As it was described: "Mulberry and hemp thriving in the valley, an opulent region in the sun."<sup>2</sup> The area of the present-day Dunhuang was Shazhou in those times, controlling a vital passage of the Hexi Corridor; Tang poetry is replete with vivid descriptions of its flourishing condition. The development of art in the Mogao grottoes at Dunhuang was

closely linked with the growing influence of Buddhism.

As the Tang Dynasty patronized both Buddhism and Taoism, conflicts between the two never ceased. Courtier Fu Yi's strong censure of Buddhism during the Wude Era of Early Tang made Emperor Gaozu issue an edict reducing the number of Buddhist and Taoist priests. Even Emperor Taizong had declared: "Reverence to Buddhism is not our intention."<sup>3</sup> In reality, he wanted only to place Taoism above Buddhism in protocol, but not to abandon the latter; on the contrary, he always patronized Buddhism with "deep emotions" (*qingshen huchi*).<sup>4</sup>

His attitude underwent an obvious change after Xuanzang's return from India with the holy scriptures. The suppressive measures meted out to Buddhism during the Wude and Zhenguan Eras did not, to any noticeable extent, obstruct its dissemination. In fact, under the vigorous patronage of Sui Emperor Wen and his son and successor Emperor Yang, Buddhism had already become a powerful social force. Sustained by the widespread belief it enjoyed among the masses, Buddhism had been developing slowly and steadily.

Religious strifes are closely linked with political struggles: the Buddhist-Taoist rift during the Northern Dynasties had its links with the struggle between Han and non-Han races, while during Early Tang its background was the struggle for power between the families of Wu and Li. The Tang rulers came from the Li family hence declaring themselves to be the descendants of Laozi. When Empress Wu wanted to replace the Li family and establish her own dynasty, she created fables, in a big way, of miracles and auspicious signs to influence public opinion. Buddhist monks, Huaiyi and Falang, fabricated the *Mahāmegha Sūtra* to proclaim her as the reincarnation of Maitreya. Consequently, as soon as she was enthroned she issued an edict placing Buddhism above Taoism. She also ordered large scale constructions of Buddhist temples and the induction of a large number of Buddhist monks and nuns. Moreover, Buddhism certainly played a crucial role in harmonizing class contradictions and in consolidating feudal rule. As Li Jie observed, "Social customs were unhealthy and the people unhappy; without Buddhism they would be restive. Then the brave would like to fight, the wise would like to intrigue and the people in the street would rise in arms."<sup>5</sup> It was against this background that Empress Wu's reign saw the upsurge of a powerful political force leading to the mushrooming of Buddhist temples and shrines; in general, Buddhism was in ascendance with various factions struggling for supremacy.



Cave No. 45, High Tang

The Dunhuang area, as the gateway to the Western Regions, had from early times been a holy shrine of Buddhism. During the reign of Empress Wu, Buddhist temples came up in great numbers. From the inscriptions of the Mogao Grottoes we have found the names of the monasteries of Longxing, Dayun, Puguang and Jinguangming, among others. The sixteen major monasteries of Late Tang were mostly constructed in the first half of the Tang Dynasty.<sup>6</sup> Many eminent monks came to Dunhuang from Chang'an to preach Buddhism. One of them, Tankuang, had stayed at Dunhuang for 19 years and had during this time written many works expounding Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> Dunhuang cave art in the first half of the Tang Dynasty developed into peak form against this historical background.

## I

A maximum number of caves were cut in this first half of the Tang Dynasty of which 127 are still extant. These caves, like the monasteries in the heartland of China, are the embodiment of

the Mahāyāna ideology, contributing to the golden age of Buddhism and Buddhist art.

Many of the caves have inscriptions giving us dates of the construction of the caves and of the statues:

2nd year of Shangyuan Era	(675)	Cave No. 386;
2nd year of Chuigong Era	(686)	Cave No. 335;
2nd year of Yanzai Era	(695)	Cave No. 96;
3rd year of Wansui Era	(697)	Cave No. 123;
1st year of Shenli Era	(698)	Cave No. 332;
9th year of Kaiyuan Era	(721)	Cave No. 130;
14th year of Kaiyuan Era	(726)	Cave No. 41;
7th year of Tianbao Era	(748)	Cave No. 180;
8th year of Tianbao Era	(749)	Cave No. 185;
11th year of Dali Era	(776)	Cave No. 148.

We may deduce that the 148th cave was built around the 6th year of Dali Era (771). The dates of some of the other caves can be deduced as follows:

22nd year of Zhenguan Era	(648)	Cave No. 431;
Zaichu Era	(approx. 698)	Cave No. 323;
Shenlong Era	(705-706)	Cave No. 217.

These dates facilitate further studies on the continuity and change in Dunhuang cave art and architecture.

Almost all the Tang Dynasty caves have a front and a back hall. The front hall is rectangular, usually with outer wooden structures which do not exist today. Historical records describe these structures in phrases such as, "from top to bottom like hanging clouds, with flying pavilions from north to south connected by coloured clouds",<sup>8</sup> and "all the caves are connected by corridors suspended in mid air",<sup>9</sup> which give us some idea of the magnificent appearance of the exterior. At the foot of the Mingsha Hill, "the Mogao caves peep at the distant hills, embrace a river in front, the water mirrors the mansions, and birds chirp all through the shady paths."<sup>10</sup> The scenery at Mogao must have seemed like a celestial abode to the travellers journeying through the boundless Gobi desert.



Interior of Cave No. 329, Early Tang

The back hall (main hall) of the caves is usually square in shape. The decorated ceiling is like an inverted dipper. The spacious interior is meant to accommodate devotees who come to view the paintings and attend functions. This layout was the most common among the caves of the first half of Tang. Only a few caves, like Cave Nos. 39 and 332, retain the central pillar and the triangular shaped ceiling. Most of the hall-style caves have only a single altar; only a few caves, such as Nos. 46, 225 and 386, have three altars. Amongst the single-altar caves, the only caves inheriting the double-storeyed altar style of the Sui Dynasty are Cave Nos. 57 and 322 which are adjacent to the Sui caves. All the single-altar caves have the statues on the western (main) wall. Very few caves, like Cave No. 205, have a pedestal with a stucco statue in the centre of the hall. From the architectural style of these caves we detect an element characteristic of the caves of the later period.

Most of the murals and painted stucco images/dunhuang have a well-conceived overall design which signals a refreshing break with the conventional layout. As a rule, inside the main altar of the western wall there is a main stucco Buddha statue with painted figures of Bodhisattvas, the ten chief Buddha disciples, supernatural beings and Devas. On either side of the altar-front are drawn Bodhisattvas or mini-sized depictions of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* or *Mañjuśrī* and *Samantabhadra*, or Buddha's life stories such as "The Elephant entering the Womb" or "Prince Siddhartha leaving his palace". On both the northern and southern walls are drawn large-sized paintings illustrating the *Amitābha Sūtra*, the *Maitreya Sūtra*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* and the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*.



Kasyapa, Cave No. 220, Early Tang

The eastern wall has a symmetrical set of paintings on either side of the entrance, the most frequent theme being the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*. On the upper side of the doorway, there are the paintings of Buddha preaching Dharma, with two or three Buddhas sitting side by side, all drawn in a refined and dignified manner. The centre of the inverted-dipper ceiling is designed as a magnificent canopy. On the four slopes are paintings of miniature Buddhas; alternatively, the scene of preaching is paved with lotus patterned tiles. The entire cave conjures up a vision of the "Pureland paradise" (*Sukhāvātī*). This was similar in character to the "Pureland halls" and "Bodhisattva pavilions" of the monasteries in the capital cities of Chang'an and Luoyang. The rich content of the murals, painted stucco, and the overall artistic achievements of the period merit a more detailed discussion.

## II

The painted stucco of the first half of Tang developed into a new phase after thirty years of sincere work on the part of the Sui artists. Firstly, almost all the statues were carved and moulded all round, carving in relief is rarely seen. The craftsmanship exhibits an advancement to a higher level than earlier times when image making had relied on shallow carving, relief carving and occasionally moulding all round. Secondly, there was considerable improvement in skills, particularly in realistic depiction; statue-making entered a higher stage in highlighting the inner feelings of the deities.



Interior of Cave No. 331, Early Tang



Ananda, Cave No. 328, High Tang

An important feature of the Tang stucco is the creation of statues in groups. The themes centre around Buddha's preaching and Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa*. The scene of preaching has Buddha at the centre flanked on both sides in even numbers by his disciples, Bodhisattvas, Lokapālas, Vajra warriors and kneeling attendants, their proximity to Buddha determined by the order of hierarchy. A single group of statues may number a minimum of seven, and can be as many as more than ten figures. Another novel feature was the painting in the background, just behind the statues: for example, behind Ānanda and Kāśyapa are drawn eight eminent monks to make up the total of the ten chief disciples of Buddha. In addition to the disciples, Bodhisattvas, devas and other figures are also drawn to make up a large entourage of Buddha and to create an impression of expanded space inside the altar which is the focal centre of the cave. In some of the altars, stucco statues and mural paintings combine to depict a sūtra. The main altar of Cave No. 180 has a complete depiction of *Maitreya Sūtra*.

The main Buddha is usually shown seated in the padmāsana pose, wearing a Chinese style square-collared gown instead of the earlier Indian *kaṣāya* in the Cao Zhongda painting style in which Buddha's clothes appeared to be clinging to a wet body. This was a change of the originally stylish, elegant and sophisticated Buddha into a somewhat flamboyant and solemn figure. Among the disciples, a dignified and seasoned Kāśyapa contrasts vividly with a young, sensitive and intelligent Ānanda. Each of the ten odd early Tang statues of disciples has his own charisma, displaying the superb skill of the sculptor. Amongst them the disciples in Cave Nos. 45 and 328 are masterpieces.

The statues of Bodhisattvas can be divided into two categories. One category starting from early Tang and inheriting the Sui style presents tall, well-shaped, graceful figures, covered with necklaces, long dhotis upto the feet, a solemn and tranquil expression on their faces. The small-sized Bodhisattvas in Cave No. 41 (cut in 726) are typical of this style. In the other category, the Bodhisattvas have plummy faces, with long eyebrows reaching their temples, jade-like skin and slender figures twisted in the shape of an "S", looking very much like tender and charming noble ladies. Statues of this category are all works of High Tang and the figures of the two Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta in Cave No. 45 are the most outstanding representations of this category.

The Lokapāla statues on both the northern and southern sides of the main altar in the caves of early Tang can be identified as Lokapāla Vaidurya, Guardian of the South; and Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa, Guardian of the North. They bear the look of Westerners, like the Lokapālas in Cave No. 322 of Early Tang who have high noses, large eyes and "A"- shaped moustaches. They are encased in armour from head to foot. There are also Lokapālas in the typical Chinese style as the Lokapālas in Cave No. 46 of the High Tang, wearing a shining armour, with hair tied in a bun over the head, fists clasped and eyes glowering, presenting a picture of heroism. The devils being trampled under the foot of the Lokapālas are sturdy, rudely carved figures, appearing in various shapes and skilfully created postures.

Thus the group of painted stucco statues, although each possessing a distinct identity and different posture and mood, nevertheless complement each other and form a composite whole. The group statues underline the high achievement of Tang sculptural and moulding art. However, Cave No. 332 (cut in 698) presents a different scenario. Inside the cave "stands a Pagoda with Mahāparinirvāṇa behind it" and

"golden deities at the sides".<sup>11</sup> A "pagoda" is the central column in the caitya style. The front portion of the column presents three standing statues of the preaching Buddha reflecting the trinity. At the back is the Buddha statue in Mahāparinirvāṇa which is the earliest of the painted stucco of Buddha in nirvāṇa among all extant Dunhuang statues.

The small-sized nirvāṇa scenes have already briefly revealed the stories of "Māyādevī descending from heaven" and "Sāriputra attaining nirvāṇa preceding Buddha". The large-sized nirvāṇa scenes, such as the one in Li Taibin Cave, i.e., Cave No. 148 (cut around 771) have integrated cave architecture, mural paintings and painted stuccos to form a grand depiction of the nirvāṇa Sūtra. It is a pity that the huge 16-metre statue of the sleeping Buddha and the statues of his disciples were all remoulded and redecorated in the Qing Dynasty. Thus their original appearances are lost to us.



Devaraja, Cave No. 322, Early Tang

Another prominent characteristic of Mogao stucco of the early Tang is the emergence of giant Buddha statues. The unprecedented socio-economic development and political strength of the early Tang made such statues a trend among artists in their quest for grandeur and magnificence. The gigantic statues emerged in Dunhuang as a product of the times. According to the records in *Jiu Tangshu* (Old Tang Annals), Empress Wu issued an order in 689 to construct "Mahāmegha Monasteries" all over the empire. In 694 she also ordered Xue Huaiyi to build gigantic statues made of jute.

The inscription in Cave No. 156 at Mogao clearly states, "In the second year of Yanzai Era (695) Chan Master Lingying and Upāsaka Yin Zu jointly built the northern giant Buddha of 140 chi." This tallies with the edict of Empress Wu mentioned earlier. The above inscription also says, "In the middle of the Kaiyuan Era (726-27) monks Chuyan and Ma Sizhong built the Southern giant Buddha of 120 chi."



Maitreya Buddha, Cave No. 130, Middle Tang

We now have two gigantic Maitreya statues in padmāsana in Cave Nos. 96 and 130 at Mogao which have a height of 33 and 26 metres respectively; undoubtedly they are the northern and southern statues mentioned in the inscription. The northern giant Buddha has been repaired and restored again and again by Zhang Huaishen of Late Tang, by Cao Yuanzhong and his wife of Early Song and by a rich man of the Qing dynasty. Consequently, the gestures, the clothing and the colours have all been changed; only the rotund head still retains its original appearance from early Tang. As regards the southern statue, it is largely in its original form, excepting for the right hand which was added by people later. It has a strong and well-proportioned body. The arched eyebrows, plump cheeks and solemn and tranquil expression fulfil the High Tang style. The square hammer-shaped cave in which the statue is sheltered, has a large base narrowing upwards--a befitting surrounding for the statue, lending it both stability and an imposing appearance. If the Southern giant Buddha is compared with the 73-metre gigantic Buddha statue on Mount Le in Jiading county, Sichuan, also constructed in the



Kaiyuan Era, the former is the more exquisitely executed masterpiece of the two.

### III

The mural paintings of Early Tang at Mogao represent epoch-making changes in both content and form. In terms of content, they may be broadly divided into the following five categories:

#### 1. Paintings of Buddha

Such paintings combine with the stucco statues to compose the main theme of Buddha preaching. In addition, there are also various depictions of the preaching Buddha who is as usual flanked by the disciples, Bodhisattvas, Lokapālas, Nāgarājas, Asuras, Gandharvas and all the other devas and Vajra warriors. Cave Nos. 321 and 334 of Early Tang have preaching scenes of the eleven-headed, eight-armed Avalokiteśvara.

We see in the Tang murals an increasing number of Buddhas as well as Avalokiteśvaras and Mahāsthāmas being presented independent of the context of the sūtras. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma became more prominent as the Pure-Land ideology grew popular throughout the country. A verse from *Bianwen* says:

I chant Avalokiteśvara  
And invoke Mahāsthāma  
There opens the distant  
Gate of Sukhāvati.  
I reach Sukhāvati,  
In a little while  
Maitreya receives me  
With a kind smile.<sup>12</sup>



Avalokiteśvara was the deity who was a beacon for the suffering masses of this world in their quest for heavenly bliss. Among the Bodhisattvas, we have also the newly emergent symmetrical portraits of Mañjuñrī and Samantabhadra, mostly drawn on both sides of the altar on all four walls. In Cave No. 331, Mañjuñrī is seen straddling a blue lion while Samantabhadra rides on a white elephant, with flying figures supporting the feet of the steed. Devas playing music descend from heaven. In Cave No. 172, Mañjuñrī and Samantabhadra are flying across the sky, riding on clouds over rivers and oceans. Such a composition foregrounds the celestial entourage of Mañjuñrī and Samantabhadra.

Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, Cave No. 321, Early Tang

#### 2. Illustrations of Sūtras

The beginning of these can be traced to the Sui Dynasty but they attained maturity only by the middle of the Zhenguan Era (637-638). The first half of the Tang Dynasty caves unfold giant illustrations of a single sūtra on a full wall. Eight kinds of such illustrations from this period are still extant:

Sutra	Number of Walls
Amitābha Sūtra	28
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra	20
Amitāyus Sūtra	17
Maitreya Sūtra	17
Vimalakīrti-nirdeṇa Sūtra	11
Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra	6
Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra	5
Fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa	1

Of the various illustrations of the first half of the Tang Dynasty, the maximum number of the extant ones belongs to those of the Amitāyus Sūtra, also known as the Sukhāvativyūha. These paintings highlighting the heavenly bliss of Buddha's domain have gone through a long process of evolution. During the inception of the Tang Dynasty, there were only small-sized compositions with ratna pond and music and dance scene added to the scene of Buddha's preaching. By the Zhenguan Era the compositions of sūtra illustrations have reached a degree of perfection.



Amitabha Sutra (detail), Cave No. 220, Early Tang

On the southern wall of Cave No. 220 (cut in 642) we have the biggest and the best preserved illustration of Amitābha Sūtra. The painting shows a ratna-pond of blue rippling waves full of blossoming lotuses. Aupapādaka Kumāras are being born out of the lotuses. Amitābha sits in padmāsana on the lotus seat at the centre of the pond flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma and surrounded on all sides by various Bodhisattvas. In front of the pond is a stage with carved railings while the background is filled in by towering mansions. Musicians line up on both sides of the stage; a couple of dancers with bejewelled headdresses, garlands and sarees, dance in the centre of the stage waving their flowing scarves. Peacocks, parrots, cranes, kalaviṅkas, jivamjivas are all around them, fluttering their wings and dancing to the music. The upper section of the painting shows an azure sky with coloured clouds and musical instruments flying about, playing themselves. The crowded composition makes up for a complete illustration of Sukhāvātī where "there is no suffering but only happiness".<sup>13</sup> This is a typical model of the illustration of the Amitābha Sūtra.

The earliest illustration of the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* is seen in Cave No. 431 (cut in early Tang) comprising themes of "Weisheng yuan" (*Ajātaśatru*), "Shiliuguan" (*Ṣoḍaśa Vipāśyanā*) and "Jiupin wang sheng" (Nine Categories of Rebirth in Heaven) without an integrated or unified composition. Starting from High Tang, the three-in-one pattern began to crystallize into a set feature of the caves. In the centre is Sukhāvātī and on both sides are vertical scrolls of paintings based on stories of *Ajātaśatru* and *Ṣoḍaśa Vipāśyanā* respectively. The story of *Ajātaśatru* is from the *Amitāyus Sūtra*. In the *Sūtra* it is said that King Bimbisāra had remained without a heir upto his old age. He was so anxious to have a son that when he came to know that an ascetic would be born as his son, he grew impatient and killed the ascetic. When the ascetic was reborn as a white rabbit, the king nailed it to death. Subsequently, his queen gave birth to a son. The soothsayer had predicted that since his son had contracted enmity before his birth, he would kill his own father one day. On reaching manhood, the prince killed the king and imprisoned the queen. The *Ajātaśatru* painting depicts from top to bottom the various scenes culminating in the queen's deliverance by Buddha.



Cave No. 431, Early Tang

The illustration of *Ṣoḍaśa Vipāśyanā* depicts the same story showing the queen witnessing various sufferings till she realized the true nature of this mundane world. Then, under the guidance of Buddha, she adopted the methods of silent meditation of the Sun and Water and other ways of cultivation to finally achieve mokṣa and entered the Buddha's realm of Sukhāvātī. The *Ṣoḍaśa Vipāśyanā* painting shows sixteen scenes, moving from top to bottom, depicting the transformation of the queen. The *Amitāyus Sūtra* was popular during the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Eras. These paintings are preserved in good condition in Cave Nos. 172 and 320.



Cave No. 148, High Tang



Cave No. 103, High Tang



Cave No. 103, High Tang

The *Maitreya Sūtra* is of two kinds: one found in the Sui murals are based on *Mile shangsheng jing* (Sūtra depicting the reincarnation of Maitreya in the Tuṣita Heaven). The painting has a simple composition: Maitreya is shown sitting cross-legged in his palace wearing a jewelled crown. In the mansions on either side are devakanyās dancing or playing music. Most of the Maitreya Sūtra illustrations of the Tang Dynasty draw mainly from *Mile xiasheng chengfo jing* (Maitreyavyā-karana). In the painting, Maitreya is shown in padmāsana, with a jewelled canopy above him. He is also surrounded on either side by a number of deities. Quite a number of Maitreya paintings, like those in Cave Nos. 148 and 445, combine both the episodes with the upper part showing Maitreya's reincarnation in Tushita heaven and the lower section showing Maitreya becoming the Buddha in future years. Below the Maitreya Buddha is a Brahmin pulling down the Ratnadhvaja (a banner adorned with seven kinds of gems). This is intended to reveal the impermanence of human life and to propagate that nirvāṇa is the ultimate happiness. On both sides of the picture are drawn King Xiangque and his princes, maids, courtiers all being ordained into Buddhahood. There are also depictions of miracles in Maitreya's Sukhāvātī, such as mountains perfuming the air, nectar gushing out from the earth, timely showers leading to seven crops in one season, garments for the needy growing from the trees. It is a world free from theft--doors stay open at night; Rākṣasas have turned into sweepers and Nāgarājas spray water to help them. Longevity extends to 84,000 years and women get married at the age of 500. It is worth noticing that the picture is interwoven with scenes from real life of the period. Thus, in the painting depicting seven crops, we see the entire process of agricultural production which includes ploughing of the field, sowing the seed, harvesting, and storing the grain. Yet another kind of real life scene is found in the many vivid depictions of marriage. All these paintings are a rich source of reference materials for historians.

*Illustrations of Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra:* This *sūtra* has a total of 28 chapters of which only a few have been illustrated. The "Jianbaota" chapter (*Stūpa sandarsan parivartana*) was painted during the Northern Dynasties. By the Sui Dynasty large canvases of the "opening" chapter on *Samantamukha* (Universal Power of Avalokiteśvara) began to appear. The *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* became a comprehensive composition during Early Tang. Like the illustrations of other *sūtras*, this too has the figure of Buddha and the "opening" chapter as the centre of the composition. Various scenes depicting stories from various chapters surround it on all sides which vary from painting to painting. The chapters on "Huacheng" (City of Illusion), on the Universal Power of Avalokiteśvara, on the Law Master (dharma guru) and on Avadāna occupy a prominent position in the illustrations. The prevailing faith in Avalokiteśvara during the first half of Tang developed the chapter on the "Universal Power of Avalokiteśvara" an independent Avalokiteśvara Sūtra with the Bodhisattva reincarnating in thirty-three forms.

Illustrations of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* are the richest in contents among those of all Mahāyāna Sūtras: they include pictures from real life such as houses, travellers and robbers, sea voyages, wars, punishments, medical treatment and religious activities. The *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* illustrations appear frequently in the caves of the first half of Tang; some caves, such as Cave No. 23, are virtually "*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* Caves".

*Illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*: The earliest illustration of the *Sūtra* in China is found from the records of Eastern Jin. Among the paintings extant, the earliest was painted during the first year of the Jianxian Era of Western Qin (420) in the Binglingsi Grottoes. It appeared at Mogao during the Sui Dynasty as a minor decoration on both sides of the main altar in most of the cases. It was only during the Zhenguan Era of the Tang Dynasty that it occupied entire walls. Illustrations of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* during the first half of Tang were mostly drawn on both sides of the doorway of the eastern wall. The largest painting extant is around 20 square metres around the theme of Mañjuśrī enquiring about the health of *Vimalakīrti*. The scene is symmetrically composed depicting entourages of Mañjuśrī and *Vimalakīrti*. Here *Vimalakīrti* is shown seated, wearing a fur coat, his hair tied by a black ribbon. There is no air of sickness about him; he has in fact the appearance of an energetic elder. This reflects the different aesthetic concepts between the people of Tang and their Eastern Jin predecessors. There is a grand scene depicting Mañjuśrī sitting on the lion-throne, and the people surround him and *Vimalakīrti* --- kings, courtiers, elders, upāsakas, brahmins and princes and officers of various countries --- who have come to enquire about *Vimalakīrti's* health. The paintings also depict various miracles, such as the 32,000 lion-thrones descending from Heaven, Nirmāṇa Bodhisattva bestowing fragrant food, devakanyās showering petals, etc., much beyond the range of Mañjuśrī's enquiry about *Vimalakīrti's* health. Such illustrations as a whole eulogise *Vimalakīrti* who is a upāsaka who has married, and has children and maids and slaves, manor and fields, but also a great preacher of Mahāyāna ideology.

*Illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*: They are based on two texts: *Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhānaviśeṣa* translated by Yijing and *Bhaiṣajyaguru-vaidurvaprabhāpūrvapraṇidhāna* translated by Xuanzang. The first text which highlights seven Buddhas produced the illustration on the northern wall of Cave No. 220. The painting comprises the seven Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas against the background of the Eastern Bhaiṣajyaguru Pureland. In the lower section of the painting, there is a building of light at the centre and trees of lights on both sides. The trees are in a wheel-like formation, shown layer after layer. On both sides are grand scenes of music and dance with bands of musicians lined up on either side. Amongst the instruments are the typical Chinese *zheng* (a 21 or 25-string plucked instrument similar to the zither) and *fang xiang* (consisting of 16 hanging iron plates which produce different notes after being struck by a small bronze hammer) as well as flutes, drums, waist-drums and bronze cymbals imported from the West, in addition to the lute and harp imported from other countries. The two dancing pairs shown jumping and swirling on a circular carpet with their scarves give us a glimpse of the famous "Hu xuan Dance" of the Tang Dynasty. In the upper part of the painting, there is a scene of "celestial petals showering and divine music constantly ringing".<sup>14</sup> Illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra based on the second text appeared after the Tianbao era. Such paintings resemble those depicting the Sukhāvātī Sūtra. They highlight Sukhāvātī, with vivid exaggeration. The main painting is flanked on both sides by the vertical scrolls showing the Twelve Vows of the Master of Healing and Nine Kinds of Untimely Deaths. Both types of Bhaiṣajyaguru illustrations propagate the doctrine that only if people follow Buddha with their mind and heart would they be free from the sufferings of the world and fulfil their cherished dreams.



Cave No. 148, High Tang

*Illustrations of the Nirvāṇa Sūtra:* Created in the first half of Tang, these illustrations are mainly based on *Daban niepan jing houfen* (The latter portion of *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*), *Da zhidu lun* (*Śāstra on the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*) and *Pusa zhutai jing* (*Garbha Sūtra*), etc. Their contents include scenes of Buddha attaining *nirvāṇa* under the "sāla tree", Kāśyapa touching Buddha's foot which came out of the coffin for him (Kāśyapa) to mourn, Sāriputra's burning himself before the cremation of Buddha, Māyādevī descending from heaven, manifestations of Buddha preaching the Dharma, the Golden Coffin of Buddha being taken out of the city amidst banners, Buddha's body igniting itself when laid on the holy pyre, kings waging wars scrambling for Buddha's relics, and equal distribution of the relics by Droṇa, etc. The paintings in Caves No. 322 (cut in 698) and No. 178 (cut in 766-779) are grand depictions. The eight kings claiming Buddha's relics is painted on the upper portion of the north wall in Cave No. 322 depicting the cavalries of Western Regions fighting over mountains and rivers --- a vivid reminder of the ancient battle scene.

*Illustrations of Dafangbian Fo bao'enjing (The Mahopāya Buddha Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness):* They appear on the ceiling of the corridor in Cave No. 148 (cut in 766-779). In the centre we have the opening chapter of the *Sūtra*, and the chapter on "Xiaoyang" (Supporting Parents) and "E'you" (Bad Companions) are arranged on the northern and southern slopes respectively. In addition, there are also paintings from the chapters of "Lunyi" (Discourse) and "Qinjin" (Intimacy) among others. In the opening chapter we have Ānanda begging for alms with a bowl in his hand, and his meeting with a begging Brahmin carrying his old mother on his shoulders. This becomes the focal point of the entire painting. The chapter on "Supporting Parents" illustrates the story of Suśānti Jātaka, and that on "Bad Companions" illustrates the story of Prince Kalyāṇakārī going to the sea. We can find these stories in *Xianyu jing* (*Sūtra for the Wise and Foolish*), the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Liuduji jing* (*Mahāyānasamyoga-satapāramitā Sūtra*). They also appear as independent story depictions in the Northern Zhou caves. The author of *Dafangbian Fo bao'enjing* is anonymous: it appears to be a fake sūtra, fabricated by Chinese monks.

*Illustrations of Raudrākṣa fighting the deity:* This theme just began to appear in the first half of Tang. Inside the altar of Cave No. 335, on the northern side, is drawn the Sāriputra and on the southern, the heretic Raudrākṣa. This arrangement becomes a set pattern, although the large-canvas composition was yet to appear. *Xianyu jing* is source of the story of the fight between the Buddha's disciple, Sāriputra, and the heretic Raudrākṣa.

### 3. Paintings of Buddhist Historical Events and Disciplines

During Empress Wu's vigorous campaign to propagate Buddhism some paintings on Buddhist historical events appeared in Cave No. 323 at Mogao. There are historical personalities and events in these paintings. There are also tales fabricated by Buddhist devotees as historical happenings. Every scene has a number of inscriptions explaining the picture.

Such historical paintings are seen on the upper portion of both the northern and southern walls in Cave No. 323. The paintings are divided into eight parts which include Śākyamuni drying the clothes

and Aśoka paying homage to the stūpa. In addition, there are scenes of historical developments in China; for example, the story of Emperor Han Wu visiting the Ganquan Palace to pay homage to the metal statues and sending Zhang Qian as envoy to the west to find out the identity of the deity. Zhang Qian's embassy to the Western Regions was a famous historical event with no connection to Buddhism. The Buddhists interpolated this historical event into the Buddhist development with an intention to strengthen their position in their struggle against the Taoists.

During the period of Three Kingdoms, the well-known monk, Kang Senghui, came to the eastern coast of China by the sea route to disseminate Buddhism. The painting shows the monk and others crossing the vast sea in a small boat and arriving at Nanjing. The King of Wu, Sun Quan, is shown receiving the holy relics and ordering the construction of Buddhist shrines. There is also a scene of Prince Sun Hao, paying respects to Kang Senghui and so on. During Western Jin, a stone statue of Buddha is shown to enter the Yangtze river from the sea floating on water. There is also the depiction of Yang Du who obtained a metal statue of Buddha during Eastern Jin.

There are also depictions of legendary stories about Fotudeng (Buddhacinga) during Later Zhou: his extinguishing the fire at Youzhou, washing his bowels by the lake, making predictions of good and bad omens after hearing the sound of the bells and so on.

There are three scenes about Reverend Tanyan of the Sui Dynasty praying for rains. Sui Emperor Wen's going out of the city to receive Tanyan, Tanyan's recital of sūtras in the palace, and his praying for rains on a platform are being depicted.

The above-mentioned stories from Western Han till Sui Dynasty have narrated anecdotes of Chinese emperors' pro-Buddhist deeds which are interwoven with legends propagating the Buddhist magical power. The obvious motivation of this is to secure the support of the central regime and consolidate the Buddhist political status. There are quite a number of vivid and brilliant depictions.

On both sides of the east wall of Cave No. 323 are painted Buddhist commandments almost explicating the commandments one by one.

#### 4. Portraits of Donors



Donor, Cave No. 329, Early Tang

During the first half of Tang, a large number of realistic portrait painters came into prominence. Not only were portraits of famous courtiers with meritorious services exhibited in the Linyan Pavilion of the imperial palace but many portraits of historical characters (such as portraits of Tang Emperor Xuanzong, Liang Emperor Wu, Xuanzang, the King of Khotan and so on) were enshrined in the monasteries of Chang'an and Luoyang.<sup>15</sup> All the well-known religious painters of the time, like Yan Liben, Wu Daozi, Han Huang, Zhou Fang, Li Guonu, were also portrait painters. Although the figures of donors in Dunhuang murals are not exactly the same as the portraits mentioned above, they are still examples of realistic portraiture. The Tang Dynasty achieved a breakthrough from the earlier style which had the same face for a thousand people; the emphasis shifted to expressing distinct personalities of diverse characters and individual traits. The depictions of the donors not only highlight their religious devotion, but also identify their status and clan. Some of the Mogao Grottoes are known for their belonging to a particular clan, for example, Cave No. 220 dating from the Zhenguan Era is often called



Donor, Cave No. 130, High Tang

the "Zhai Family Cave".<sup>16</sup> It was the family temple nursed by several generations, viz., Zhai Siyuan, Zhai Tong, Zhai Fengda and others. During Early Tang the portraits of donors were usually arranged on the lower portion of the four walls of the caves. In some cases, the master is escorted by servants in groups of threes and fours. There are painted processions of the donor-family completing a whole circle on the walls. It was during High Tang that the donors began to occupy both sides of the passage leading to the main hall. The portraits became increasingly larger, and all of them were shown facing the main Buddha in the cave, with flowers in hand, paying homage to Buddha.

The portraits included those of princes, dukes, ministers, local officials, noble women, monks, upāsakas as well as attendants, slaves and horsemen. The Early Tang portrait of a female worshipper depicted on the southern side of the north wall in Cave No. 329 shows her with her hair tied in a bun wearing a narrow-sleeved, unlined upper garment that exposes her chest and a long skirt as she kneels gracefully to offer her prayers. The narrow-sleeved garment and skirt were popular attire during Early Tang in interior China, which must have spread as far as Dunhuang. The portrait of a male donor like that of Zhai Siyuan below the altar on west wall of Cave No. 220 shows him wearing a lotus crown and the loose dress typical of the Tang upper class.

Cave No. 130 of High Tang, enshrines the portraits of Le Tinghuai family drawn in the Tianbao Era (742-755). The painting of Le Tinghuai on the north wall of the corridor shows him wearing a turban and a robe, carrying a tablet in his waist. The inscription on the painting reads: "Courtier, General and Governor of Jinchang province, first-grade medal awardee Le Tinghuai offering homage to Buddha." Behind him are standing three sons and servants and slaves. On the south wall is drawn Le Tinghuai's wife with her hair tied in a bun, wearing a green shirt and red skirt, a white shawl over her shoulders and holding a censer in the hands, paying homage to the Buddha. The inscription reads: "Wife of the Governor, maiden name Wang, from Taiyuan worshipping Buddha with devotion." She is followed by two daughters and other attendants. The attendants hold fans, flower vases and a harp. They express their mood in their open glances. Some of the maids wear men's attire, such as a robe with a belt in the waist and a transparent scarf on the head which reminds us of the Tang poem:

New fashion and clever style,  
Eyebrows painted straight,  
Tying colours with a smile,  
Transparent scarf on her head.

This is in strong contrast to outlook of the attendants of the famous Tang painting "Duchess relaxing amidst spring scenery". We thus have the palace fashions drawn on the Dunhuang walls. In the background we see weeping willows and fluttering butterflies which embellish the otherwise solemn atmosphere with life and vitality. The portrait of a female donor which we have just discussed is, indeed, an outstanding masterpiece of Tang portrait of female characters.





Cave No. 431, High Tang

Behind the image of the donor we often see foreign faces among the servants and slaves, and these foreigners often appear along with horses and carts. In the painting of the donor on the lower portion of south wall in Cave No. 431, there are three fine horses, the stableman leading the horse looks as though he is unable to bear the exhaustion and is almost falling into sleep. Here, we see the artists' efforts in unfolding the interesting details of real life while executing religious and devotional tasks. The portraits of donors of Early Tang have, indeed, achieved unprecedented success.

## 5. Decorative Drawings



Caisson Ceiling, Cave No. 329, Early Tang

Due to changes in the cave designs, the decorative art in Early Tang was no longer intimately linked to the cave architecture. In the hall-style caves, the most important thing was to decorate the inverted dipper ceilings. Second in importance were border decorations. Meanwhile, new decorations not related to the architecture were created, such as the canopy, the lotus-throne, flags and banners, carpet and decorative design on dresses, etc. There was an evolution of the designs from the earlier periods' focussing more on deities and fairies to the new phenomenon of floral and geometric patterns becoming dominating. The designs are those of lotuses, grapes, pomegranates, camellias, curry leaves, flower clusters, whirling lines, water chestnuts, bead and fish-scales, clouds, dancing dragons, double phoenixes, lotus-born flying figures and designs of brocades.

The decorated caisson of Early Tang is inevitably shaped like a canopy resembling the heaven, hanging high on top, imparting a magnificent and solemn aura. The canopy was developed from the emperor's umbrella used in earlier times which was adopted as ceiling decorations in architecture. This also characterizes the sinicization of cave temple in China.



The centre of the caisson is mostly decorated with the inverted lotus or flower cluster designs. The green coloured ratna-pond (where the lotus belonged) is transformed into the blue sky. All four sides of the caisson are embordered with layer after layer of designs; the outermost layer of design are the tassels of the umbrella embellished with coloured bells and belts.

The decorated caissons of Early Tang are refreshingly innovative in ideas. The spacious square ceiling of Cave No. 209 is filled with grape and pomegranate designs, with criss-crossing creepers ingeniously

highlighting a bumper harvest, thus breaking the earlier monotony of using only the lotus as the main design. In the centre of the ceiling in Cave No. 329, we see a circle composed of lotus petals, signifying the turning of the Cakra. Outside the lotus cakra is the azure sky with coloured clouds floating and apsaras flying. The scene is resplendent with colour and the rhythm of movement.

During High Tang, the style of caisson decoration underwent a change. Vivid and lively scenes gave way to a solemn discipline and gorgeous magnificence. Cave No. 320 is the representative of Kaiyuan and Tianbao Eras. The centre of the ceiling has the flower cluster design, embroidered by well-proportioned layers of motifs, combining rigidity with variety. The colour tones are warm and gorgeous with a typical High Tang accent.

In the first half of the Tang the halo was already a disc-shaped decoration with elaborate and exquisite sculpture. Here we see the achievements in decorative art during the Tang dynasty. One of the halos of Cave No. 188 has a white lotus at the centre and pomegranate and curry leaves encircling it, while twisted branches and leaves look as if sucked into the whirlpool, rising and falling with the rhythm of music. A halo in Cave No. 444 of High Tang is composed of lotus, grapes, pomegranate, lotus leaves, buds, vines and other floral designs, with the lotus bud coming out of pomegranate, and grapes out of lotus leaves, while the vines interweave into a net. It is complex without the feeling of disorder, a clever design with unrestrained dynamism.



Caisson Ceiling, Cave No. 320, High Tang

The most magnificent decorative designs are to be found in the costumes. Both in the stucco statues and mural paintings the Arhat's kaṣāya, pleated dhoti, the Saṅkakshikā of Bodhisattvas, the rich embroidered skirt, woven and painted apparel of the donor are simply gorgeous with floral designs, the flowers mingling with peacock feathers. Then, there are the designs knit by gold thread, glittering and magnificent. The richness of the Tang brocade designs may be seen from the Tang fabrics recently unearthed at Turfan which are similar to the drawings on Mogao murals. This shows that the decorative art of Dunhuang had its affinity with real life, thus diminishing its mythical religious touch, and becoming a living entity.

#### IV

The Tang Dynasty saw an extraordinarily high level of achievement in the fields of culture, art, poetry, prose, music, dance, painting and calligraphy. The Mogao art of the Tang dynasty is an integral part of this whole.

As mentioned earlier, Buddhism developed in China as a result of government patronage. Monasteries mushroomed from Chang'an and spread to the length and breadth of the country. The main form of moulding art, i.e., statues and murals, also appeared mostly in the monasteries. Innumerable anonymous artisans were the creators of these religious works of art. Meanwhile, painters led by Wu Daozi and sculptors led by Yang Huizhi also made monasteries one of their main arenas to give full play to their

talents. The murals and statues inside the monastery-caves were not only products of religious propaganda, but also exhibits of their artistic talent. Famous artists and unsung artisans vied with each other to convert their artistic labour into high values thus elevating Buddhist art of the Tang Dynasty to its farthest limits.



Worshipping Bodhisattva, Cave No. 384, High Tang

With the reunification of China during Sui, the cultural influence from heartland China on Dunhuang increased steadily. After the founding of the Tang Dynasty, there were brisk movements of monks, merchants and envoys. Sketches of the temple murals which used to be circulated in interior China also found their way to Dunhuang. Cave No. 17 at Mogao (the once famous repository of manuscripts) has yielded a large number of samples of mural illustrations of, say, Maitreya and Raudrākṣa. Though these are rough sketches, they form complete samples with all the characters and plots of stories. They were used by the Dunhuang caves as the basis or reference for their creation. Moreover in the illustrations of the sūtras during this period we find water-side pavilions, tropical plants like bananas and palm, ships of various shapes and sizes as well as sailors dressed in southern style --- sufficient to prove the tremendous influence from heartland China on Dunhuang cave art after the reunification of north and south.

Due to the expanded cultural contacts and exchange of friendly visits with foreign countries, the Tang culture and art absorbed the outstanding cultural achievements of other countries. We should not overlook the important factor which contributed to the development of the Tang culture and art. During the Zhenguan Era, Xuanzang brought back large number of paintings which helped preaching the scriptures. Wang Xuance who was four times on an embassy to India carried back sketch books.

The famous painter Weichi Yiseng of the Yuechi nationality came from the Western Regions to establish his reputation of expertise in painting foreign countries as well as Bodhisattvas.<sup>17</sup> The Dunhuang art of the first half of Tang was both directly or indirectly influenced by the art of Gupta Dynasty of central India as is manifested in the dresses and postures of Bodhisattvas as well as in the three-dimensional colouring method.

However, borrowing and influence are no substitution for creation. The art of the Thousand Buddha Caves grew in the rich soil of Dunhuang. Here, the rich life source at this strategic midway station on the Silk Road has played a decisive role. It is the profound tradition and hard work of the artists of Dunhuang that gives Dunhuang art its distinctive character and individuality apart from being an integral part of Tang culture and art. We offer a brief analysis of the five major aspects of Dunhuang art.

## Image Creation



Bodhisattva, Cave No. 45, High Tang

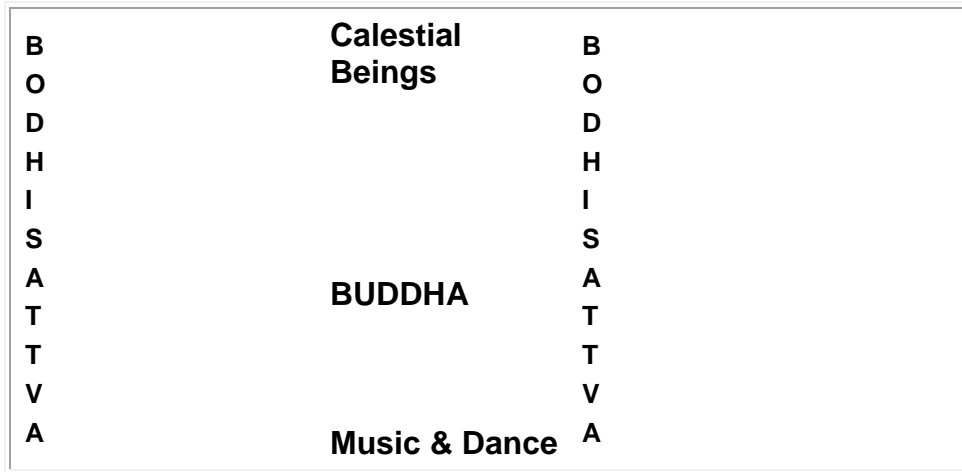
In the early Dunhuang art figures there is an excessive element of exaggeration and imagination. Through forty years of experimentation during Sui, both the Tang statues and portraits have moved towards realism. The Tang figures distinguish themselves by their having good proportions, plummy faces, physical beauty, solemn and serene expressions. While discussing Tang painting, Dong You of Song Dynasty observed, "Human figures are painted in exuberance and in full bloom....This is the Tang style. It is often said that Lady Yang had a delicate frame in full bloom. After seeing the paintings, I can appreciate what Master Han has described about the past, the arched eyebrows and plummy cheeks. It was the Tang fashion to admire plump figures."<sup>18</sup> His is a faithful observation: these Tang figures often recall the "fat model which emerged from real life and represented royal and aristocratic aesthetic criterion." It became a rage during High Tang. This is not only true for Dunhuang caves, but also true for Tang works of art passed down or excavated elsewhere.

Another characteristic of the Dunhuang model is the humanization and femininity of the Bodhisattvas. The sitting Avalokiteśvara in Cave No. 205, the standing attendant Bodhisattvas in Cave No. 45 and the Bodhisattvas in the murals of Cave No. 217 are all strong and beautiful with the full figure and graceful posture of a woman. Moreover, the hair is tied high in a bun, with hairpins and decorations typical of the palace ladies. They wear the typical transparent linen shirts and silk skirts and scarf of high society ladies, true to the saying, "Viewed with compassionate eyes, there is no formidable sight."<sup>19</sup> As Daocheng said, "The Buddhist statues during Song and Qi of the Southern Dynasties had thick lips, drooping noses, sharp eyes and prominent cheeks, typical looks of men. Since the Tang Dynasty Buddhist figures have been drawn as delicate female singing girls. No wonder people these days compliment the palace women as Bodhisattvas."<sup>20</sup> And the Buddhist devakanyās painted by Han Gan in the murals of Baoying Monastery look like the real portrait of Xiaoxiao, and other prostitutes patronized by Master Qi.<sup>21</sup> We see here that the Buddhist celestial images/dunhuang of the Tang Dynasty were but copies of human figures of the mundane world. In this context, we have the observation of Guo Ruoxu of the Song Dynasty: "The painters today have made it a vogue to depict pretty faces to please the mass viewers in total disregard of the ideas behind the paintings."<sup>22</sup> Although the remark is evidently critical, it also shows that the feminization of the Bodhisattvas was viewed with favour by the masses and had hence become increasingly popular.

## Composition

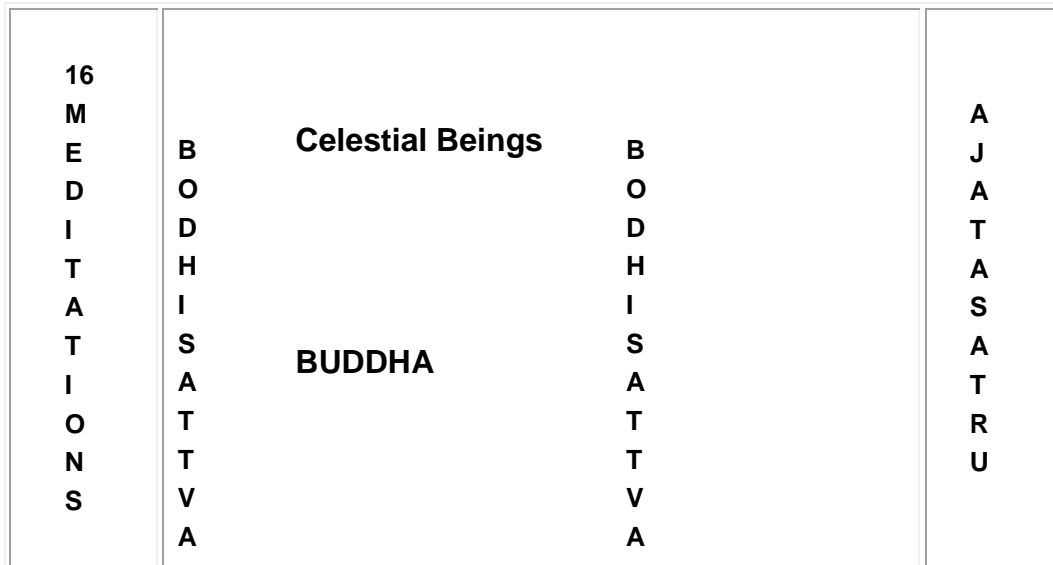
Here we shall discuss mainly the compositions of illustrations of the Sūtras. The huge compositions of the Sūtra illustrations in Early Tang were inventions within the parameters of dharma born out of great pain and after lengthy trials by the artists. Illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra underwent a process of expansion from individual episodes about "Ajātaśatru", "Ṣoḍaśa-vipaśyanā", and "Nine categories of Rebirth" into an integrated comprehensive gigantic composition. Illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra multiplied from one chapter to many chapters, and even to the extent of covering one whole cave, then could a definite pattern take shape. The compositions can be broadly categorized below:

1) In the centre is painted Buddha and his attendants, interwoven with story scenes on all four sides like stars surrounding the moon in a unified entity. Illustrations of Amitābha and Maitreya usually adopt this composition.



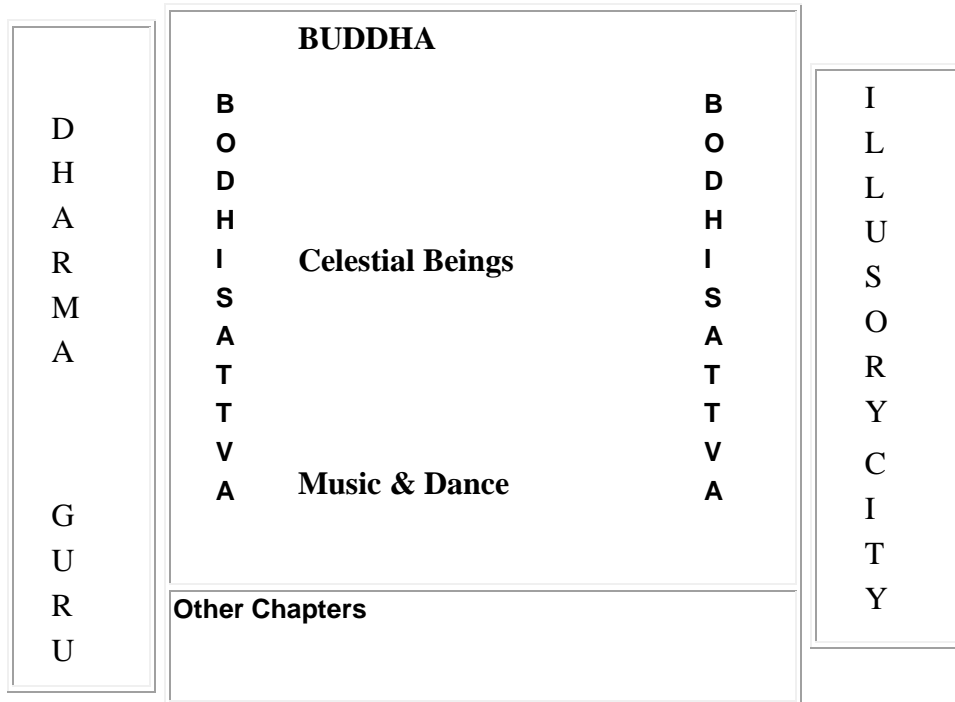
2) The painting is divided into three columns of left, centre and right. The centre shows a large-sized painting of the Buddhakṣetra-loka world, and two vertical columns with serial paintings on the two sides; thus there is both unity and prominence of the focal theme. Illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra often adopt this format with the two side columns accommodating stories of "Ajātaśatru" and "Ṣoḍaśa-vipaśyanā".

Similarly, illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra also have stories from the "Twelve vows" of Bhaiṣajyaguru and "Nine Kinds of Irregular Deaths" painted on both sides respectively. On both sides of the illustrations of Avalokiteśvara are painted the "Eight Hardships" and the "Thirty-three reincarnations" of the deity.



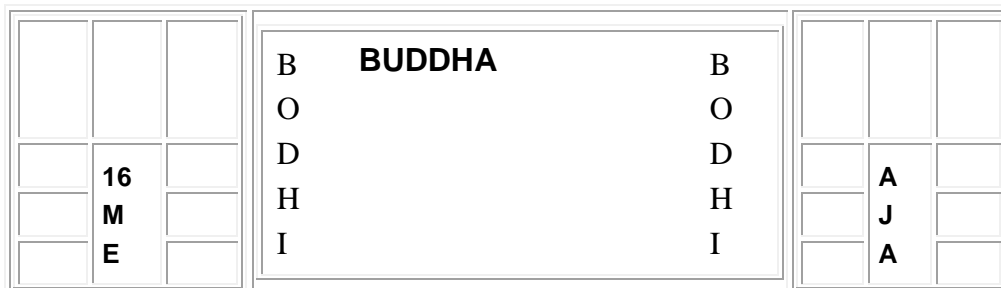
3) In the centre of the upper portion is the Buddhakṣetra-loka. On its left and right and below are inserted various stories which surrounded theme in a U-shape. Illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra and the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra sometimes adopt this composition. The opening chapter of the Saddharma-

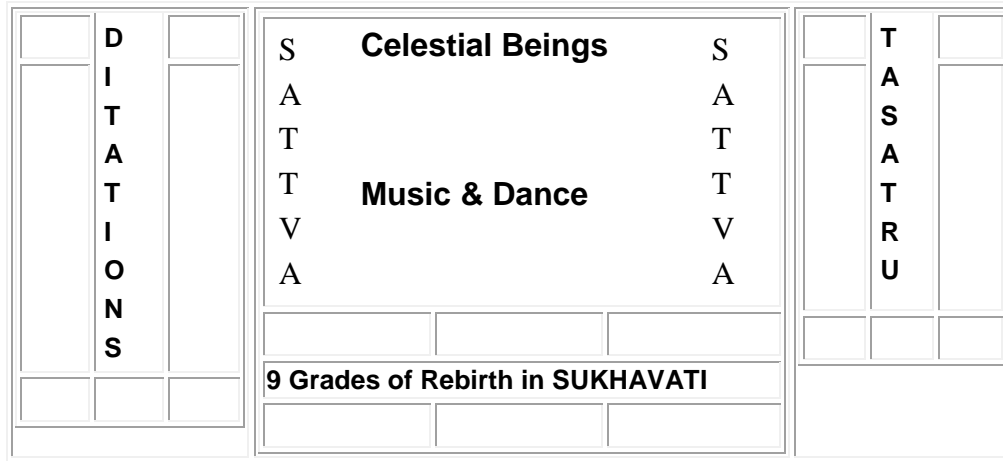
puṇḍarīka assumes the main theme. On its left and right are paintings of the "illusiory city" and "dharma guru" while the rest of the stories of the sūtra are painted on the lower portion. The main theme of Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra is the western paradise of Sukhāvātī while on both sides are painted the stories of "Ajātaśatru" and the "Sixteen Meditations" while the stories of "Nine categories of Rebirth" are painted on the lower portion.



4) A variety of the above composition is this type, with the paintings, on the left, right and lower portion forming a U and the shape is further divided into small squares each containing a story, exactly like the comic strips of our times.

Illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra are the sole possessors of this composition and Cave No. 171 of High Tang provides a typical example.

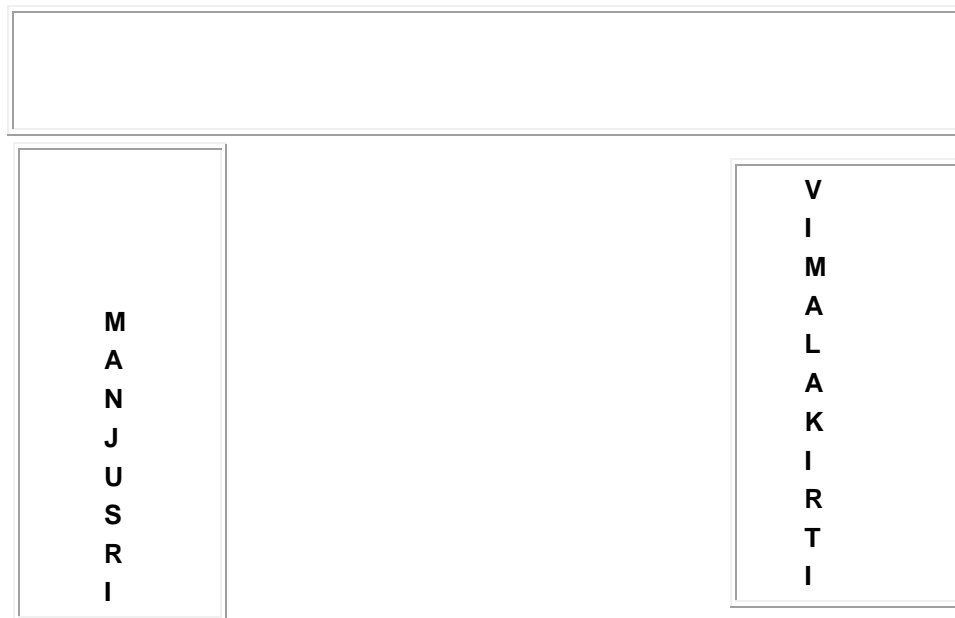




5) Illustration of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra and the story of the

Conversion of the Heretic Raudrākṣa provide this pattern the focal theme being torn apart and the main exponents concerned, Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti in one and Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa in the other, are

painted on the two sides. Surrounding the two main characters are interwoven various celestial plots. This is a lively, vivid composition attracting a lot of attention of the viewers.



6) Illustrations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa during Early Tang form a rectangular horizontal scroll with the episodes moving from left to right and then, from right to left. This vivid free composition is a departure from the earlier stereotypes of Nirvāṇa paintings.

In all these compositions the Buddhakṣetra-loka is shown in a prominent position. But the presentations of ideas and ideals vary even within the same categories of compositions. The Sukhāvātī of Early Tang often has a stage emerging from the ratna-pond. Bodhisattvas, musicians and dancers are all on the stage; there are blue waves rippling in the lower portion and a clear sky in the upper portion portraying a carefree uninhibited mood. Beginning from High Tang, Sukhāvātī became a place of magnificent palaces and pavilions where the deities gather and watch performances of music and dance. The atmosphere is one of royal living. The palace perspective of Sukhāvātī is a demonstration of the internalization of spiritual divinity into the mundane life.

With the maturity of development of Sūtra paintings during High Tang, the outstanding feature of art composition is its "fullness". The illustrations of various sūtras are rich in content with numerous characters, leaving out virtually no details of the sūtra texts. With such paintings filling every corner of all four walls of the caves, the viewer is overwhelmed and even at a loss. However, because of the overall harmony and stability in the composition the viewer is impressed by the sense of order. The arrangement and distribution of the characters and scenes have moved away from the earlier method of flat presentation. There is mastery in highlighting the main features, in the treatment of density, and in the distribution of figures and objects according to the will of the artist. The magnificent presentation of the Buddhakṣetra draws the viewer into this world. At the same time, such a composition also presents a highly decorative mood.

Worth noticing is the technique of perspective drawing in the composition. In addition to the usual focal-point perspective a method of combining the bird's-eye view with focus is judiciously adopted. For the first time, there appears a horizon in the painting creating the effect of:

Peaks fan out  
To reach yonder clouds  
And sky and water  
Mingle their colours.<sup>23</sup>

Typical examples are seen in the scene of travelling in Cave No. 217, and in the painting of Kang Seng Hui setting sails towards Nanjing as well as Gao Li's obtaining the Buddha statue in Cave No. 323. These are landscape paintings embodying human stories in which mountain peaks rise and fall and water waves flow into unfathomable distance: "a few inches of picture highlighting the scenes of a thousand miles."<sup>24</sup> We see here the process of creation of the traditional Chinese landscape painting technique of "sanyuanfa" (three dimensions of distance). The perspective technique used in these illustrations of sūtras has gained new heights in perspective drawing of architecture.

## Line Drawing





The early Dunhuang murals mainly used "iron-hard lines" in sketches. While continuing with this during the Sui Dynasty a freer orchid-leaf style was created which became very popular during Tang. Wu Daozi excelled in this style. The most typical example of the orchid-leaf line sketch is seen in the illustrations of Avalokitesvara at Mogao Cave No. 45 of High Tang.

Cave No. 217, Early Tang

The Tang murals employed draft lines, final lines, decorative lines, in various stages of painting. The draft lines used a light black ink to outline the contours of the figures. The sketches of Bodhisattvas in Cave No. 201 show that in the drafting stage before colouring, dark black lines were used to finalize the figures. Then the faces of the characters were retouched by vermilion lines which appeared golden to the viewers. White-powder lines were also applied on the twists and turns of the scarves and the folds of skirts to express the movements of their free flight. These are the decorative lines. The whole process of using these lines to create the figures can be seen in the murals of Cave Nos. 220 and 217.

The Tang Dynasty painters had already judiciously alternated between primary lines and complementary lines. The outline of the face and figure of a character is made with primary lines which are broad and solid. The folds of the clothes, hair and beard are drawn in complementary lines which are thinner and more obscure. This combination of both has achieved a harmonious balance between the solid and the obscure and a judicious dispensation of emphasis, creating an impression that the figures are firmly planted in the background, with a three-dimensional appearance. The celestial warriors on the north wall of Cave No. 220 and the disciples of Buddha inside the altar of Cave No. 217 not only have vivid facial features being highlighted by broad and firm contour lines but also have their bodies revealed behind their clothing. This style of "penning the bones" achieved a new height during the Tang Dynasty.

The Tang painters of Dunhuang have proved their mastery of the brush with firm landing, heavy pressure and swift movement. As Gu Kaizhi observed, "Light objects betray the mastery of the brush."<sup>25</sup> The swift movement of the brush can be ascertained from the movement of the whirlwind dancer depicted in Cave No. 220 and the flying scarves of the apsaras in Cave No. 321. Here we are reminded of what Su Shi has said in his poem complimenting the painting skill of Wu Daozi:

Like a storm with its swiftness  
His broad sweeps begin,  
The atmosphere is within him  
Even before his brush reaches.<sup>26</sup>

Such a difficult technique combining with the artist's sense of a stormy atmosphere has created works of art with remarkable vitality, converting the mural walls into a dynamic vision.

However, swiftness was not the only characteristic of the Tang painters. In drawing the solid aspects of the characters, like facial contours, limbs and joints, the movement of the brush must slow down, just as Gu Kaizhi has observed, "weight is required for displaying the substance." In sum, the Tang painters freely varied their brush movements according to the needs of expressions, occasions, apportioning varying degrees of weight and speed, upward and downward sweeps of the brush as if orchestrating a piece of music with well-concerted rhythm and beat.

## Colouring



Sakyamuni returns to Kapilavastu, Cave No. 217, High Tang

The Tang murals are rich in colours of various kinds and degrees in addition to various mixed colours. The colours used are azurite, mineral green, cinnabar, vermilion, earth red, gamboge, indigo blue, gold, black ink, etc. It is mainly due to the highly developed skill in colour creation and colouring that paintings of the first half of Tang become the most magnificent in Mogao paintings. Today, we can see more or less the original colours of this phase in Cave No. 322 of Early Tang, Cave No. 220 (cut in 642) and Cave No. 217 (705-707) to appreciate their magnificence.



Preaching Scene, Cave No. 220, Early Tang

Unlike earlier murals, the Tang works show a masterly manipulation of colour as the main instrument in depicting reality and achieving a decorative effect. Differences in mood and style at various developing stages are expressed through different colour schemes. Great attention was paid to the background colour by the Tang masters; some preferred earth-red to achieve a sense of density and candour which betrays the influence of the past. Others preferred the earthen colour of the wall as background which gave an effect of harmony, creating a new style of Early Tang. There were still others who preferred using the white-washed walls of earlier period as background to achieve a vivid and bright colour tone which became the artistic style of High Tang. The colouring result of a mural is to a large extent dependent on the colour of the background.

The Tang colouring scheme differentiates between the adding technique and contour-controlling technique. The adding technique is to add different tones of the same colour layer by layer to create tonal complexity and three-dimensional effect. A lotus petal painted in High Tang could be the result of 16-20 layers of colour additions. This technique produces tonal richness, thickness and a lustrous effect. The contour-control technique was mostly used for showing the three-dimensional effect of the deity figures. The ancients had one kind of such technique imported from the west and another being invented in China. A synthesis of the two was developed during the Sui Dynasty which further developed in Early Tang into a new technique of varying accents. One of them was the traditional Chinese contour-control technique with Tang innovations such as adding red on the cheeks referred to as "red face", "lotus face", "peach blossom make-up" and the "twilight make-up" in the Dunhuang Songs. We can find examples of these in the Bodhisattvas of Cave Nos. 57 and 322. Another technique is the slight application of light on a white background to create shining smooth jade faces, examples of which are the Bodhisattvas in Cave Nos. 45 and 217. There was yet another modified technique as presented by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Cave Nos. 321 and 220 who have a white line on the bridge of their noses, faithful to its Indian influence.

Besides Buddha and Bodhisattvas, the Devarājas, Lokapālas and arhats have a strong three-dimensional effect with a towering frame and vibrant muscles. Amongst them, Lokapālas in Cave No. 220 and arhats

in Cave No. 217 are particularly outstanding.

## Delineating the Mood



During the first half of the Tang Dynasty, the talented artists at Mogao effectively adopted the line drawing and colouring techniques discussed a little while ago to create a large number of deities and other figures full of artistic vitality. First, the artists attempted a bold innovation in stylization and characterization, revealing the innate traits of the characters and their inner dynamics while depicting them sitting, walking, sleeping or speaking. The inner tranquillity and outer calm unite in the beautiful form of the Bodhisattva in meditation with his head bowed and his cheek resting on his palm, a vacant look in his eyes, as seen in the illustration of the Pureland Sūtra in the mural of Cave No. 71. The Bodhisattvas attending the preaching, drawn on the top of the altar in Cave No. 321, look like a group of lively and cheerful young girls leaning on the railings of the balcony of Devapuram and looking into the distance or looking down.

Meditating Bodhisattvas, Cave No. 71,  
Early Tang

Their graceful postures and emotional eyes display their individuality. The Bodhisattva statues in Cave No. 45 (cut in 713-741) are graceful, plummy and healthy with such facial expressions bordering between a faint smile and non-smiling, making their viewers puzzling. The painted stucco Lokapālas of the same cave present a Northern Devarāja clenching his fists towards the demons with righteous indignation while the Southern Devarāja has a disarming smile showing his valiant nature of a warrior.

The Tang murals have characters echoing and contrasting with each other to create an organic whole in the total picture. In the painting of the wife of the Governor on the south wall of the corridor in Cave No. 130, the individual liveliness of the attendants contrasts with the solemnity and devotion of the mistress thus helping to highlight the theme.

The depiction of an emperor enquiring about the health of Vimala-kīrti in the illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra in Cave No. 220 is also an outstanding masterpiece. The emperor wearing a crown and in royal attire is striding forward with both arms open. In the front is a courtier, his eagle-like nose and sharp eyes show his astuteness. Among the attendants clustering behind him, some are carefree while others cautious. The heads of various nationalities are standing around with folded hands in postures of simplicity and obedience. The great painter of the period, Yan Liben, painted his famous painting "Emperors of past dynasties" some thirty years later than the date of Cave No. 220. Yan's masterpiece does not compare favourably with this mural as far as the grandeur of scene and vividness of characters are concerned. The capturing of mood is a high skill in artistic characterization processed by religious imagination and idealism and mastery of art. Thus, vivid images/dunhuang of the human world are transformed into deities of the celestial kingdom. The success of painting the celestial kingdom stems from the artists' profound observation and understanding of human life. The unification of the country and the relative stability and rapid social and economic development of a century and a half opened up unprecedented vistas for the people's artists in their quest for idealism and inspiration.

The fanaticism of religious pursuit became the source of their creativity. During this period, conditions

permitted the blending of artistic absorption of alien nutrients thus creating a confluence of the trends from all directions into a Chinese style. At the same time, poetry, prose, music, dance and other fine arts also developed hand in hand and reached their peak in the history of art and literature of China.

The first half of the Tang Dynasty of Mogao art occupies the most prominent place in the 492 caves today not only because of their quantity but because of their high level of achievement. Its influence on the *Ku shuitu la* caves in Xinjiang is quite evident. The Tang Dynasty which was the period of unprecedented prosperity of Buddhism saw the spread of Chinese Buddhist art to various directions with its impact reaching Western Asia and India across the Congling range. In the east, it sailed across the sea to marry with Japanese Buddhist art. The contribution of the Dunhuang artists during this period is like immortal fire.

*Translated by Sonu Agnihotri*

(From *Dunhuang shiku yishu lunwen*, pp. 168-195)

## Dunhuang Art in the Second Half of the Tang Dynasty

The Second year of the Jianzhong Era (781) was a watershed of Chinese history and saw the beginning of Tibetan control over the Hexi region. From this time onwards up to the end of the Tang Dynasty comprised a period of 126 years. During this time, the Tibetans ruled Dunhuang for 67 years, corresponding to the conventional phase of Middle Tang, while the remaining 57 years saw Dunhuang under the rule of Zhang Yichao and his family, corresponding to the conventional phase of Late Tang. The political rule of the two different nationalities (Tibetan and Han respectively) produced differences in the historical characteristics of Mogao cave art. This essay discusses the art of the Mogao Caves with particular emphasis on the two periods mentioned above.

### I. The Tibetan Period: Middle Tang



Corridor of Cave No. 16, Late Tang (Entrance of Cave No. 17)

With the rebellions of An Lushan and Shi Siming in the fourteenth year of the Tianbao Era (755), the Tang government was compelled to move its crack troops from Hexi, Gansu and Shaanxi to the heartland to suppress the rebellions and recover the rebel occupied areas. Hexi became a power vacuum and the Tibetans seized the opportunity to make their entry into the region. Although the skeleton troops defending Shazhou put up a brave resistance for eleven years, they were finally outnumbered, and Hexi Corridor was fully occupied by the Tibetans in 766.

Under the Tibetan occupation, there were sharp contradictions between the ruling Tibetans and the subjugated Han Chinese. The *Dunhuang Manuscripts* refer to an armed rebellion led by a gang of seven leaders headed by Fan Guozhong who stormed into the city of Shazhou and killed the commissioner and other Tibetan officials.<sup>1</sup> Oppression and revolt fostered unity among the people and eventually forced the Tibetan rulers to employ the services of Han and other nationalities in the upper strata as officials in their governing machines, details of which are documented in the chapter on "Tubo" (Tibet) of the old and new *Tangshu* (Annals of the Tang Dynasty) and other historical records.



Cave No. 158, Middle Tang

Since the Tibetans were Buddhists it was natural that during their occupation of Hexi, monasteries mushroomed, monks and nuns were ordained in great numbers and Buddhism prospered greatly. There were about sixteen or seventeen monasteries, many of which adopted the names of temples of the "heartland": Kaiyuan (New Era); Qianyuan (Beginning); Longxing (Dragon Rising); Bao'en (Filial Benevolence); Jingtū (Pureland); Jinguangming (Suvarṇa-prabhāsa); Xingshan (Upsurge of Virtue); Puguang (Viśva-prabhā). The temples were institutions similar to those in the "heartland" with a hierarchy of three leaders (*san gang*), tenant households and estates which were exclusively under their control, free from government interference.

At that time, the monks and nuns of Shazhou numbered around a couple of thousand. In the fourth year of the Jianzhong Era (783), the Tibetans rehabilitated more than eight hundred monks, nuns, army

officers and soldiers who had been captured by them from this region.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of monks and nuns was high in a province of less than 30,000 population. During the second half of the Tang Dynasty there emerged a large number of eminent monks from Dunhuang, such as Tankuang (a monk from Chang'an who settled in Dunhuang), Moheyan (a preacher of Chan Buddhism), and Facheng, Hongbian and Wuzhen (all three of whom were honoured as eminent Tibetan monks). At the same time, the Tibetan rulers sent envoys to Chang'an to invite monks to preach Buddhism in Tibet. Records tell us that "Monks Liangxiu and Wensu were sent (from Chang'an to Dunhuang) in the first instance to be replaced later every year."<sup>3</sup> The Tibetan rulers also acquired Buddhist scriptures from heartland China and had them translated into Tibetan. The eminent monk, Moheyan, was one who translated many Chinese scriptures into Tibetan and vice-versa for circulation. Contacts between Tibet and China which had been brisk from Early Tang further intensified.

Prior to the Tibetan occupation, there had been frequent fighting in the Hexi Corridor which led to a group of incomplete caves during the Kaiyuan and Tianbao eras.<sup>4</sup> In some caves only a niche was carved or a ceiling painted. Such caves total eighteen in number. After the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang, life became relatively stable and the incomplete portions in these caves were gradually completed. Around forty-eight of the caves, carved out during the Tibetan period, are extant, with a total of sixty-six, if we add the ones mentioned above. In both number and scale this surpassed the caves of High Tang.

Only two caves of the Tibetan period have clear inscriptions mentioning the date of excavation. The first is in Cave No. 365, earlier known as the "Hall of Seven Buddhas", built by the monk Hongbian. On the edge of the niche there is an inscription in Tibetan which says that the shrine of the cave was made in the Year of Rat according to the Tibetan calendar (832) and it was completed in the autumn of the Tiger year (844) when Khrigtsug-Ide-btsan was the ruler of Tibet. Cave No. 231 has the other inscription: "Dafan gu Dunhuangjun mogaoku yin chushi gongxiugongdeji" (Account of the merit of Saint Yin in Mogao Grottoes building in Dunhuang Province under the Great Tibetan rule),<sup>5</sup> which says that in the fourth year of the Kaicheng Era (839) during the reign of Emperor Wenzong of Tang, the cave was built by one Yin Jiazheng. The dates of the other caves may be deduced from the portraits of the donors and the inscriptions.

The caves built during the Tibetan occupation are primarily of three kinds. The predominant kind is in the style of the palace hall with a partition; the room at the back is the main hall. The main chamber is square in shape and has an inverted dipper ceiling. The main wall on the west has a square niche according to the High Tang convention; some of these are double-storied.

The second type is the Nirvāṇa Cave, with a horizontal rectangular shape and a ceiling like an inverted dipper. The front of the main wall features the sleeping Buddha covering the entire length of the hall. The third is the tunnel type with the vaulted ceiling connected with a tunnel at the back, for the worshippers to file past the Buddha in circle. The last two types are fewer in comparison to the first.

The layout of the first category is stereotyped. Consider, for example, Cave No. 231, built by the Yin Family --- one of the many rich and powerful families who ruled Dunhuang for generations. Many male members of the Yin Family were officials of the Tibetan government. Hence the cave was gigantic with well-conceived designs. On the south, west and north walls of the front hall are drawn four big Devarājas. The connecting corridor has Sahasrabhuja Sahasranetra Avalokiteśvara drawn on its ceiling and donors drawn on both sides. In the centre of the inverted dipper ceiling of the main hall is the caisson in the shape of a magnificent canopy surrounded by flying figures on all sides. In the centre of all the four slopes below the ceiling is painted a preaching Buddha, densely surrounded by miniature Buddhas in their hundreds. Inside the square niche, deep into the west wall, is a horse-shoe shaped seat of Buddha along with fragments of seven destroyed statues. There are sculptures in relief below the Buddha seat. On the walls inside the niche behind the statues are ten paintings connected like a screen, comprising drawings

from Buddhist stories such as Prince Sattva feeding himself to the tigress and the Kalyāṅkrī Jātaka. The inverted dipper shaped ceiling of the niche altar is ornamented with chessboard patterns, while on the four slopes are drawn forty auspicious symbols. On both sides of the wall outside the niche are painted illustrations of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. On the south wall are illustrations of *Tianqingwen jing* (Devatā Sūtra), Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra and Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra. On the north wall are drawn illustrations of Maitreya's Paradise, Avatamsaka-Sūtra, the Paradise of Bhailajyaguru. On the east wall the south side of the entrance has the illustrations of the Sūtra for Filial Piety while the north side has the illustration of Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra. Below each sūtra illustration are four panels with detailed stories drawn from the respective sūtras. Above the entrance of the east wall are painted the portraits of Yin Bolun and his wife from Suo family, parents of Yin Jiazheng. The inscription inside the cave *Yin chushi gong xiu gongde ji* (Accounts of Duke Yin building the monument)<sup>6</sup> faithfully detailed the structure and content of this cave.

The painted stucco statues of the Tibetan period follow the Tang convention, producing Śākyamuni, the three Buddhas of the past, present and future and the Buddhas of the seven kalpas. There are also groups of statues with Buddha in the centre surrounded by his disciples, Bodhisattvas, Devarājas and Lokapālas on both sides as well as a huge Buddha statue in Mahāparinirvāṇa.

Cave No. 158 is the biggest of the Tibetan period. The painted statue of a sleeping Śākyamuni on the altar inside the cave is sixteen metres long. Śākyamuni lies on his right side and looks as though he is in serene sleep. He has a plummy face and a well-proportioned body. The folds of his kaṣāya flow down gently, revealing the curves of his figure. This is one of the best specimens of the large-sized painted Buddha statues. The deities and laity surrounding Śākyamuni are painted on the wall, each absorbed in his own sorrowful mood. The illustration is faithful to the description in Chapter 2 of *Dazhidulun* (Prajñā-Pāramitā-Śāstra)<sup>7</sup> and in the relevant chapter of *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.<sup>8</sup> It is a masterpiece of mural art.



Bodhisattva and Bhikṣu, Cave No. 159, Middle Tang

The painted stucco statues of the Tibetan period have certain distinctive characteristics. The Bodhisattva images/dunhuang betray the style of High Tang with plump faces and arched eyebrows with beautiful eyes, jade-white complexion, slim and graceful figures, gradually losing the pliable figure characteristic of the Gupta style which could even twist into the shape of the letter "S". Their charm lies in the manifestations of their inner feelings revealing the beauty of natural harmony in their elegant and reserved postures. The colours of the statues show sobriety and brightness, departing from the earlier trend of extravagant and magnificent colours. A typical example is the group of Bodhisattvas in Cave No. 197 radiating purity and naivete. Yet another specimen is found in the couple of Bodhisattvas in Cave No. 159, reserved and solemn. All of them show further feminization in characterization.

Equally remarkable is the treatment of their costumes. Colourful and exquisite patterns of the decorative background match the light and soft dresses which further merge into curves of their figures as well as the jade-like smoothness of their skin. Their overall harmony enhances the distinctiveness of every individual statue.



Bodhisattva, Cave No. 197, Middle Tang

The Devarājas have large faces and a fair complexion. They either wear helmets partially covering their faces or have their hair tied on top. They wear full-length armour from upper body to their boots and have Land Deities supporting their feet. Cave Nos. 154 and 459 are full of figures such as the ones described. The armour was imported from Khotan and differed from all the thirteen types of armour with shining fish-scale-shaped plates then in use in heartland China.

The warriors are also shown wearing another kind of attire known as the "tiger skin". In accordance with the Tibetan convention, all those who had distinguished themselves in battle were honoured with tiger skin. The Devarājas in Cave No. 205 are shown standing with a hand on the handle of the sword, wearing armour on which is draped a tiger skin to highlight their valour. In brief, the painted stucco statues of the Tibetan period demonstrate the typical characteristics of their times and nationality.

The murals of the Tibetan period are somewhat similar in content to those of the first half of the Tang Dynasty and may also be categorized by a five-fold division:

1. Paintings of Buddhist images/dunhuang
2. Illustrations of Sutras
3. Auspicious symbols
4. Decorative patterns
5. Portraits of donors.

Illustrations of the sūtras still predominate among these categories. Following is a more detailed account.

### **1. Paintings of the Buddhist images/dunhuang**

During this period, we see a drastic reduction in the number of the Buddha images/dunhuang and a great increase in the images/dunhuang of Tantric deities. Besides Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha, Buddhas of the Four Directions, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāma Buddha, Kṣitigarbha, most of the images/dunhuang are of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara, Sahasrabhuja Sahasranetra Avalokiteśvara, Sahasrabhuja Sahasrapātra Mañjuśrī and others painted according to the sūtras, in a stereotypical manner. The Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara wears a large bejewelled crown, each of the six arms holding a lotus, a talismanic wheel and a pearl, conforming entirely to the description of Amoghavajra's translation of *Shewuai jing* (Apratihata-Mahākaraṇḍā-Mahādhāraṇī Sūtra).<sup>9</sup>

Among the Tantric images/dunhuang, there appear two types of depictions of the Sun and Moon gods. One kind is the drawing in the upper section of top of both sides of the corridor: two big wheels facing each other with devas riding five horses or seated on a lotus. These are Sun and Moon gods from the West. The other type is the Nāgarājas at the foot of Mount Sumeru holding small wheels in their palms; the wheels are painted with jade rabbits and golden birds. These two kinds of depiction show the synthesis of



Chinese and Western styles in the Buddhist art themes of the Tang Dynasty.

## 2. Illustrations of Sutras

During the initial period of Tibetan occupation, the main task of the artists was to complete the unfinished drawings in the caves of High Tang according to the High Tang convention of a single sūtra occupying an entire wall. During the middle of the Tibetan period, we see new themes of the sūtra being introduced; a single wall is made to accommodate three or four illustrations. The Zhang family cave (Cave No. 159) has illustrations of nine sūtras while the Yin family cave (Cave No. 231) has twelve. The popular themes of the sūtra illustrations during this period are as follows:

Name of Sutra	No. of Paintings
Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra	26
Paradise of Maitreya	20
Paradise of Bhaiṣajyaguru	20
The Western Paradise of Amitābha	17
Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra	7
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra	7
Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra	3
Devatā Sūtra	9
Vajracchedikā Sūtra	7
Bao'en jing	6
Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra	4
Avatamsaka Sūtra	5
Laṃkāvatāra Sūtra	1
Vīśeṣa Cintābrahmapariṣcchā	1



Cave No. 159, Middle Tang

The last seven themes were new additions. The variety of sūtra illustrations reflects the mushrooming of new sects following the revolt of the Tiantai sects. These sects satisfied the requirements of the devotees with their varying ideologies and also enriched the contents of cave art. Just as it is described in "The Tablet of Zhang Huaishen": "The four walls are painted with a rich fare of illustrations of sixteen sūtras, showing that all roads lead to enlightenment. There are varied images/dunhuang of the reincarnations of the trinity --- Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni and Maitreya. A cave is the capsule of Buddhahood in all ten directions of the universe. A single room is enough space for the three lokas."

Although *Bao'en jing* is listed as the work of Latter Han, it is of anonymous authorship. A careful examination reveals it to be a combination drawn from various sūtras. The main aim of the sūtra is to propagate loyalty to the state and filial piety characteristic of Confucian teaching. It is a typical "fake sūtra", one fabricated by the Chinese.<sup>10</sup> Among the new sūtra illustrations, *Bao'en jingbian* (Illustrations from the Bao'en jing) was the richest in content. Besides the centrally placed scene of *Xu pin* (Introductory Chapter) depicting Buddha preaching and the Brahmin carrying his mother on his shoulders and begging for food, all the other illustrations have the four main stories of *E'you pin* (Bad Companion), *Xiaoyang pin* (Supporting Parents), *Lunyi pin* (Upadeśa), and *Qinjin pin* (Near and Dear Ones). The story of "Bad Companions" narrates the story of Kalyāṇakārī entering the sea, and that of "Supporting Parents" details the story of Prince Sujāta. Both appear independently in the caves of the first half of Tang in Dunhuang. The story of "Upadeśa" describes a girl among the deer who was fostered by a celestial being and was married to the king. She gave birth to a lotus which was regarded as inauspicious by the king who had the flower thrown away by the side of a tank. One day, the king was pleasantly surprised to discover 500 lotuses by the side of the tank and under the leaves of the lotus, there were 500 boys. The king asked 500 ladies of his court to bring up a boy each. In course of time, the 500 boys grew up into courageous and mighty warriors who brought security to the country. Ultimately, however, all the 500 princes renounced the world and became Pratyeka-Buddhas. The story emphasizes that life is as illusory as one's shadow in the water. The palaces and costumes in the paintings are in Chinese style.

The story of "Near and Dear" shows a golden skinned lion who was dear to a monk, listening to the preaching of dharma. An ambitious hunter trapped and killed the lion and presented the king with its skin. Disapproving of this act, the king not only did not reward the hunter, but sentenced him to death; he then cremated the lion's skin and built a stūpa to remember it. This story propagates the idea of forsaking evil and embracing virtue (as exemplified by the king) and enduring extreme suffering to save the world from wickedness (as exemplified by the lion who was Buddha's incarnation). The story also censures hypocrisy.

Illustration of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra was also one of the new themes introduced during the Tibetan period. It is similar in composition and presentation to those of the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra. In the centre is painted the preaching scene in Buddha's realm. There are stories on both sides, arranged vertically. The Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra has a total of nineteen chapters. The main story is that of self-sacrifice similar to the Sattva Jātaka of the early period. Another story is about an elder's son by the riverside, saving the fish. During the end of Western Zhou and beginning of Sui the same stories had appeared independently on the ceilings of the caves. Now both were presented in a vertical arrangement on either side of the painting.

Avatamsaka Sūtra was the main scripture of the Huayan Sect which rose to prominence during the Tang Dynasty. Illustrations of this Sūtra started appearing at Mogao during the Tibetan period. The Sūtra details nine assemblies in seven different places. The nine assemblies are neatly arranged in three lines on the painting and are all depicted as preaching scenes. The lowermost section shows a sea, representing the so-called "solemn sea of the world adorned by lotus". There is a big lotus at the centre of the sea which is surrounded by clouds on all four sides. There are also various kinds of wheels, houses, mountain peaks, musical instruments and tools painted in the background. These are probably Mount Sumeru and the rivers, rotating and spinning objects, pavilion, etc. described in the chapter of "Huazhang shijie" (The Flower Treasury World) in the sūtra. Illustrations of Avatamsaka Sūtra like those of *Tianqingwen jing* and *Laṃkāvatāra Sūtra* deal with abstract philosophical and theological concepts while concrete story plots and vivid scenarios are found wanting. On the whole, they are poor specimens of artistic creativity with monotonous presentations.

Illustrations of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* show some development during this period. Besides the additions of themes from the chapters of "Disciples" and "Upāya" on the screen paintings, the most prominent feature is the group of princes from various countries at the court of Vimalakīrti. It has virtually become a painting of Tibetan ruler paying homage to Buddha. The Tibetan ruler is shown wearing a high red felt hat and a robe covering the left arm, high leather boots with a belt around the waist. He is carrying a long sword, while his attendant holds an umbrella with a curved handle. He is escorted by maid-servants in the

front with incense sticks in hand and by armed guards who stand behind him. There is no mistaking the dignity of a monarch in his bearing which relegates the princes of various countries to the background. On the opposite wall is painted an identical crowd of royal personages surrounding Mañjuśrī. After Zhang Yichao recovered Hexi in the second year of the Dazhong Era (848), there was no longer any painting of the Tibetan ruler. The religious art of this period is a true mirror of the socio-political changes of the times.



Devaraja, Nagaraja and Garudarajas, Cave No. 158, Middle Tang



Devata Sutra(detail), Cave No. 158, Middle Tang

The layout of cave murals of this period follows a certain format. The upper part of walls is allotted to big sūtra illustrations, while the lower portion of most of the caves enshrines screen paintings, closely packed like the teeth of a comb. The screen paintings mostly deal with detailed stories from different chapters of the relevant sūtras illustrated on the upper walls; but there are also independent Jātaka tales and stories about Buddha's life occasionally providing a change. It is worth noticing that below the illustrations of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra there appear small-sized screen paintings of Mount Wutai which show five interconnected towering peaks, presenting a wholesome and lush green landscape, as on the lower portion of western wall in Cave No. 159. Most probably, this painting appeared after the Tibetan ruler had requested for a Map of Mount Wutai in the fourth year of the Changqing Era (824).<sup>11</sup>



Cave No. 158, Middle Tang

In Cave No. 158 as mentioned earlier, the combination of murals as a background for painted stucco statues in the illustration of Mahāparinirvāṇa marks the highest perfection in such an arrangement. Not only is it a gigantic composition, but it is also an example of exquisite depiction. On the western wall behind the sleeping Buddha we have Devas, Nāgas and others of the eight categories of supernatural beings as well as scholars among the mourners. On the south wall are painted the ten major Buddha disciples who are there to mourn. Each of the figures is distinctive in character, posture and mood, revealing the uniqueness of their inner mental universe. At the same time, despite the variety and richness of representation, the theme is finally a unified one. The intolerable grief of the mourners contrasts with the tranquil and serene sleeping Buddha. The contrast is also the best way of demonstrating the idealistic stage of attaining nirvāṇa, considered to be the highest achievement among the Buddhists. The central idea of the entire cave appears to be: Nirvāṇa is Heavenly Bliss.

### 3. Auspicious Symbols

These constitute an entirely new theme which appeared during the second half of the Tang Dynasty at Mogao. The four slopes of the inverted dipper roof of the main altar of the caves were usually spaces allotted for Bhaiṣajyaguru's Paradise. In the fourth year of the Kaicheng Era (839), when Yin Jiazheng built Cave Nos. 231 and 237, such slopes were painted with auspicious symbols, totalling thirty-seven paintings. The arrangement of the auspicious symbols follows an overall plan. Most of them are imported from Buddhist legends of India, Nepal and Gandhāra. The Early Tang ambassador Wang Xuance's *Xiguo xingzhuān* (Account of Travels to Western Kingdoms) alluded to "innumerable auspicious symbols in the western kingdoms" (Reference: *Fayuan zhulin* or Jewel Forests in Dharma Garden). Xuanzang has many references to them in his *Datang xiyuji* (Account of the Western Regions written in the Great Tang Dynasty). Many of the auspicious symbols are from Khotan, Zhangye and Jiuquan. Symbols from foreign countries, such as Buddha in Sārnāth, with the deity seated in paryaṅka-bandha with a kaṣāya over his shoulders. Below his seat is a wheel adorned by lotuses, each of which has Buddha's footprint inside the

flower. Buddha's feet are drawn on the wheel. The inscription in ink describes it as "the auspicious image at Sārnāth in Vārāṇasī of Central India". Another auspicious Buddha image from India is a white Buddha sitting in paryaṅka-bandha with the inscription describing him as the "white silver Maitreya of India". There is also the Central Indian auspicious figure with a seated Bodhisattva and a double halo. In front of the throne are the busts of two Bodhisattvas, each one carrying the same inscription: "The illuminating auspicious figures of Magadha in Central India". The auspicious image of Maitreya is a Bodhisattva with five arms, the two raised arms holding the sun and moon and the middle two carrying rulers. The inscription declares it to be "Bodhisattva Maitreya who has accompanied Śākyamuni to the City of Contamination (Yincheng)". Yet another is the image of a standing Buddha raising his right hand with the sun wheel above it. There is a three-feet bird inside the wheel. His left hand hangs down and below it is the moon. Inside the moon is a cinnamon tree and a jade rabbit. The inscription says, "Image pointing to the sun and moon". Another auspicious symbol of King Aśoka building stūpas shows a big hand shielding the sun with many small stūpas below it. There is no accompanying inscription. But a similar picture of the period of the Five Dynasties has an inscription saying, "King Aśoka has built 84,000 stūpas".<sup>12</sup> There are other auspicious signs like the Nepalese auspicious figures (according to the legend of water and fire tanks) and the pair of auspicious figures from Gandhāra.<sup>13</sup> Just below the latter are two poor men who wear high red felt hats and long robes covering the left shoulder, characteristic of Tibetan costumes.

Auspicious symbols imported from Khotan include the carved sandalwood figures in the city of Bhīma; the figure of Śākyamuni from the Haiyan Temple of Khotan and auspicious symbol from Kancheng of Khotan. In addition, we have Sāriputra and Vaiśravaṇa Devarāja also from Khotan, one holding a metal staff while the other wields a spear as if about to plunge it into the sea.<sup>14</sup> The sea shows a lotus in full bloom on which is seated Buddha. The upper portion of the painting shows a city and a small stūpa is seen on one side, illustrating the two disciples carrying out Buddha's order to turn the sea into land in order to build a country and construct stūpas and temples there.

Auspicious symbols which originated from Hexi comprise the Buddha statue from Zhangye, Śākyamuni statue from Jiuquan and a sacred image from Fanhe county. The latter figure is used to depict the magical feat of the eminent monk Liu Sahe of Northern Wei.

The Buddhist auspicious figures originally came from outside China. They conform to China's tradition of love for auspicious sign to a certain extent, so that the propaganda of Buddha's magical power could universally prevail in China. Meanwhile, many indigenous Buddhist auspicious figures were also developed in China demonstrating the continuous sinicization of Buddhism in various aspects.

#### **4. Decorative Patterns**

As illustrations of sūtras increased greatly during the Tibetan period, the overall layout of a cave assumed importance. A frame design with decorative borders was gradually introduced. Every illustration of the sūtra is framed with decorative floral borders orderly arranged, giving an overall aesthetic effect of balance, uniformity, integrity and harmony.

The centre of the cave decoration continued to be caisson. Next would be the back halo and the chessboard design on the ceiling of the altar. After the emergence of screen-paintings inside the altar, the halo behind the head and back of the statues gradually disappeared.

The decorative patterns differ slightly from the earlier ones. They are primarily designs of lotus, pomegranate, camellia, flower clusters, whirling lines, rhombus, square, cloud, hanging horn, circular chain with pearls, swan, phoenix with flower in the beak, parrot, peacock, pigeon, kalaviṅka and the

seated lion. The silk weave and printed designs on the dresses are rich and magnificent, and exquisitely coloured, adding a new splendour to the decorative art of the second half of the Tang Dynasty.

The caissons of the second half of Tang Dynasty show a well-executed structural pattern. Decorative borders even exceed ten layers. On the square ceiling we find spinning curling lotus petal in which is a seated lion probably representing the idea of "the lion emerging from the udumbara flower". There are parrots, peacocks and pigeons circling, singing and dancing on all the four corners. Green patterns appear encircling the decorative border giving it a three-dimensional effect, eliminating the flatness of the canopy. This feature ushered in the new caisson art of the later period.



The most prominent border design of this period is that of pomegranate combining with vine, which may extend to several tens of feet, and sometimes even encircle the entire cave. It runs up and down with a wave-like irregularity. To the transformation of the pomegranate tree into a vine was added another refreshing technique of partially exposing the pomegranate seeds outside the skin. The leaves curl along the curve of the vine resembling a whirlpool. They also create the feeling of the unpredictable meteorological phenomenon. But the colours are light and harmonious, warm and fragrant, romantic like a lyric poem.

Decorative Pattern, Cave No. 361, Middle Tang

## **5. Portraits of Donors**

During the initial period of Tibetan occupation, portraits of donors were extremely few in number in the murals. They gradually increased during the middle phase as large-sized portraits of eminent monks also began to appear. For example, on the side of the door in Cave No. 158 we see four monks who are nearly two metres high. The inscription reads: "The reverend monks, masters of three disciplines, and worthy successors of the Patriarch". The enlargement of monk figures was probably due to the participation in governance by Tibetan monks, which meant a consequent enhancement of their status. The portraits of donors of the second half of Tang surpassed those of the High Tang. Often the donor is placed on the eastern wall facing the main deity of the central altar, saluting Buddha from distance to show the outstanding status of the donor.



Donors, Cave No. 231, Middle Tang



Cave No. 231 was built in 839 by Yin Jiazheng who was a powerful aristocrat at Dunhuang. A group of donors are represented on the door: the female figure has her hair tied in a bun; she is wearing a dress with

woven pattern and a long skirt with an embroidered silk cape. The inscription reads: "My late beloved mother, the grand-daughter of Mr. Suo, the Dunhuang clerk, paid homage to Buddha along with me." This was the mother of Yin Jiazheng. The male figure is seen wearing a turban, a robe with a belt and boots. The inscription says: "My late father, Governor of Changsong in the province of Dan in the Tang Dynasty" who was Yin Jiazheng's father, Yin Polun.

Corridor of Cave No 220, Middle Tang

Cave No. 359 is one dating from the second half of Tang. Here, portraits of the donors encircle the cave. The male figures appear on the north wall. They have high red headgear and are wearing traditional Tibetan long robes and leather boots. It is not known whether they are Tibetans or just Hans in Tibetan attire. On the south wall, the female figure in an embroidered silk cape is completely in Han attire. Cave No. 225 has male figures in Tibetan attire with the inscription "Wangshanu" (Slaves of the King). The figures are vividly drawn; the lines have a rare flow and possess a lot of vitality. In the corridors of Cave No. 220 are two recently discovered portraits of donors who are in Tibetan attire. This corresponds to the account of the Hexi area in the contemporary "Zhang Huaishen bianwen" (Bianwen literature on Zhang Huaishen) which says, "Shazhou is the only province where the fashions are identical with interior China."<sup>15</sup> It is an authentic reflection of the social life of the period.

## II. The Era of Zhang Yichao --- Late Tang

After the Tibetan occupation of Shazhou, the labouring people among Tibetans and Han Chinese and other nationalities became close neighbours sharing a common fate; this situation was described as: "Different people living in an example of communal amity, as one family."<sup>16</sup> However, the brutal rule of the Tibetan masters provoked a number of rebellions in Shazhou. The aristocratic Zhang family seized this opportunity to lead the people's rebellion in the second year of Dazhong Era (848) and conquered Dunhuang and Jinchang, assuming governance of the province. A strong army was built up to do the fighting as well as tilling. The central government of the Tang Dynasty sent a mission to Hexi in the fifth year of Dazhong Era (851), gave recognition to the rebel army and appointed Zhang Yichao as its commander-in-chief.<sup>17</sup> In the fourth year of the Xiantong Era (863), Zhang Yichao finally recovered Liangzhou and linked it up with the territory under the control of the imperial capital Chang'an.

By recovering Hexi, Zhang Yichao helped to unite the country and reopened China's traffic with the west and increased agricultural production. In the seventh year of the Xiantong Era (866), Zhang Yichao went to Chang'an to take up a position in the imperial court. His nephew, Zhang Huaishen, stepped into his shoes and did a good job governing Hexi. Within 40 years, the province regained the prosperity of Early Tang.<sup>18</sup> However, the ruling family was wrecked by power struggles. In the first year of the Dashun Era (890), Suo Xun, son-in-law of Zhang Yichao, killed the family of Zhang Huaishen. In the first year of the Qianning Era (894), the fourteenth daughter of Zhang Yichao led the army to destroy Suo Xun and installed the grandson of Yichao, Zhang Chengfeng, as the governor of Shazhou. In the second year of the Tianyou Era (905), before the demise of the Tang Dynasty, Zhang Chengfeng founded the "Golden Mountain State of Western Han" giving himself the title of "Baiyi Tianzi" (White-robed Son of Heaven). In

911 this separatist regime surrendered to the Uighur and formed an alliance with them. Zhang Chengfeng died soon after in 919-920, and the ruling power in Dunhuang was transferred to the Cao family.



The Zhang family were devout believers in Buddhism and held well-known monks in high esteem. The Han monks, Hongbian and Huiyuan, and the Tibetan monk Facheng were all granted special patronage. The family exercised religious authority in addition to political authority. Under such conditions it was inevitable that a large-scale construction of caves took place. Among the 60 odd caves of the Tang Dynasty built after the Dazhong Era, the following caves have precise chronological inscriptions which prove that they were carved out during the period of supremacy of the Zhang family:

Cave No. 17, Late Tang

Period	Constructed by	Cave No.
5th year of Dazhong Era (815)	Hongbian	16 & 17
The Xiantong Era (860-874)	Zhai Farong	85
6th year of the Xiantong Era (865)	Zhang Huaishen	156
10th year of the Xiantong Era (869)	Suo Yiban	12
12th year of the Xiantong Era (871)	Xihe and her mother	107
From the Dashun Era to the Jingfu Era (890-893)	Zhang Chengfeng	9
From the Jingfu Era to the Qianning Era (892-898)	Reverend He	196
From the Guanghe Era to the Tianyou Era (898-907)	Zhang Chengfeng's mother from the Yin family	138
3rd year of the Tianfu Era (903)		192
3rd year of the Tianyou Era (906)		468



Hong Bian, Cave No. 17, Late Tang

On the basis of these inscriptions and the Dunhuang Manuscripts, we may work out the approximate dates of a large number of other caves as well. Even the above inscriptions clearly provide the chronology of the caves built during Zhang Yichao's regime, and provide us with means of researching the chronological connections of these caves and their stylistic evolution.

The caves built during the Zhang Yichao period belong to three main types. The first is the type with the altar in the centre and a rather broad and long corridor. These are passages surrounding the central altar. Stairs lead up to the altar, behind which is a screen. On the altar there is the U-shaped Buddha seat on which is placed Buddha's statue; originally, there used to be railings around the Buddha seat. The back screen is connected with the top of the cave. This is similar to the fan-shaped wall of the palace and monastery architecture. Cave No. 16, built by Hongbian, is the earliest



example of this style and one of the large caves of Late Tang.

The second type is with a square deep niche, similar to the square-niche caves of the Tibetan period. They are maximum in number but are generally small-sized caves.

Still another type is the caityagṛha style. In design, it is similar to the caitya type caves at Mogao in the early period. The main hall of the cave is rectangular, the front portion has an inverted dipper ceiling while the rear portion has a flat ceiling. A square column stands in the centre of the hall. Square-shaped deep niches are carved into these frontal ceilings of the column. Screen paintings adorn the three sides of the niche with a U-shaped Buddha seat on the base. In fact, this type amounts to transporting the deep niche from the front wall to central column that faces the east. Cave Nos. 9 and 14 are among the few examples of this type.<sup>19</sup> The stucco images/dunhuang of the Zhang Yichao Era have basically inherited the themes and styles of the Tibetan period. The images/dunhuang inside the niches are mostly small in size. A niche generally has seven to nine figures. However, the central images/dunhuang in the altar are much larger than those from the Tibetan period. The altar of Cave No. 196 built by Suo Xun features the statue of Śākyamuni sitting in paryāṅka-bandha on a vajra-throne with the rear screen supporting his back. On the rear screen is painted the Bodhi tree, the two disciples of Buddha, Kāśyapa and • nanda, standing in attendance on either side, while the Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are seated in a calm casual manner with one foot placed on the seat. On the northern side is still extant the statue of the Northern Devarāja. The large and strong figure of the Bodhisattva sitting in a casual manner on the north side is as tall as 2.6 metres and indicates the high level of maturity attained by the Dunhuang stucco technique.

Stucco images/dunhuang of eminent monks begun during the Zhang Yichao Era added a new element to the repertoire of the painted sculptures of Late Tang. In Cave No. 138, the front room was for the monks, inside which we see statues of monks with silvery faces and wearing the kaṣaya.

The statue of monk Hongbian in meditation in Cave No.17, built in 850, shows the face of a lay person beaming with radiance and vigour. He wears a special robe. The statue is indeed a masterpiece in the genre of painted sculptures. The northern wall behind it has paintings of two Bodhi trees. A bag and a water bottle are hung on the tree, a maid and a Bhikṣuṇī holding round fans stand on either side of the monk.

The murals of the Zhang Yichao Era have the following content: illustrations of the sūtras; tantric paintings, auspicious figures; decorative patterns; portraits of donors and story paintings. However the lion's share of the murals is, as usual, taken by the illustrations of the sūtras.

### 1. The Sutra Illustrations

Besides inheriting the sūtras illustrations of the Tibetan period, the late Tang murals have several new themes, as shown below:

Source of Sutra	No. of Paintings
Illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra	30
Illustrations of Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra	22

Illustrations of the Paradise of Maitreya Sūtra	18
Illustrations of Amitābha Sūtra	16
Illustrations of Devatī Sūtra	10
Illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra	9
Illustrations of the Bao'en jing	9
Illustrations of the Avatamsaka Sūtra	9
Illustrations of the Vajracchedikā Sūtra	8
Illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra	5
Illustrations of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa-uttamarāja Sūtra	4
Illustrations of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra	3
Illustrations of the Siyifantianwen jing (Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā Sūtra)	2
Illustrations from Bao fumu Enzhong Jing (The Sūtra for Redemption from the gratitude of Parents)	1
Illustrations of the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa	3
Illustrations of Māra Vijaya	2
Illustrations from the Surangama Sūtra	1
Illustrations from the Ghanavyūha Sūtra	1

The themes of the illustrations get increasingly richer until a single cave can accommodate as many as 16-17 different sūtras. For example, Cave No. 156, completed in 865, was built by Zhang Huaishen to eulogise the achievements of his uncle Zhang Yichao. This is a typical cave from Late Tang where the cave art is dedicated to a personal eulogy of the Hexi rulers. The ceiling of the front hall of this cave is quite damaged; only the illustrations of Māra Vijaya and *Bao fumu enzhong jing* are extant. On the four slopes of the inverted dipper ceiling in the main hall are illustrations from Laṅkāvatāra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, Maitreya and the Avatamsaka Sūtras respectively. On both sides of the curtain on the west wall are illustrations of the exploits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. On the south wall are illustrations of the Vajracchedikā Sūtra, the Paradise of Amitābha, *Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā Sūtra*, Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra and Bao'en jing. On the East wall are the illustrations of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa-uttamarāja Sūtra and Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra. The plan of Cave No. 9 built by Zhang Chengfeng has special features. Excepting for the eastern slope on the inverted dipper ceiling which has illustrations of the Maitreya Sūtra, the other three slopes are devoted to illustrations of the Avatamsaka Sūtra. On the sides of the eastern slope there are illustrations of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. On the north, south and west walls are three gigantic sūtra illustrations of heretic Raudrākṣa fighting with the deity, the Vajracchedikā Sūtra and Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra respectively.



Fight between Raudraksa and Sariputra (detail), Cave No. 9, Late Tang

Among the new sūtra illustrations which appeared during the Late Tang, that of the heretic Raudrākṣa fighting the deity typically reflected the characteristics of the times. This illustration was based on Xuda *qijingshe pin*, the Chapter on Sudatta building a viḥāra in *juan 10* of *Xianyu jing* (Sūtra for the Wise and the Foolish).<sup>20</sup> The text is variously called "Zhiyuanyinyouji" (Story of the Jetavana) or "Zhiyuantuji" (Description of the Jetavana) in different versions. The earliest appearance of this theme is in Cave No. 10 of the Western Thousand Buddha Caves of the Sui Dynasty which has unfortunately been extensively damaged. At present we can only see traces of the scenes like that of the lion devouring the bull, the vajra pestle smashing the mountain, the storm uprooting the tree and the garuḷa conquering the poisonous nāga etc.

The next illustration of this theme dates back to the second year of the Chuigong Era (686) of Early Tang enshrined in Cave No. 335 of the Mogao Grottoes. The painting has constructed the struggle between the two main characters, Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa, without a complete composition. It was only during the time of Zhang Yichao that large-sized illustrations with a comprehensive story came into being.

Cave Nos. 9 and 196 of Late Tang house the two most comprehensive illustrations of Raudrākṣa. The story develops with Sāriputra and Sudatta seeking a suitable place for the building of a viḥāra, with sequences showing a big elephant carrying gold and gold scattered all over the places, etcetera, painted at the bottom and on the two top corners. At the centre King Prasenajit is seen sitting under a canopy watching the contest of magical powers between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa along with his courtiers. The bulk of the space is, of course, devoted to the progression of the contest. The two combatants are ranged on either side --- Sāriputra on the left and Raudrākṣa on the right. According to the story, Raudrākṣa first transformed himself into a tree with luxuriant foliage upon which Sāriputra transformed himself into a whirlwind and uprooted it. Raudrākṣa then changed himself into the jewel-studded tank of the Pureland Paradise and Sāriputra into the six-tusked white elephant who drank up all the water and emptied the tank. When Raudrākṣa became a mountain with fountains and trees, Sāriputra became a Vajra-warrior, who only had to wave his vajra for the mountain to vanish at once. Raudrākṣa then appeared as a ten-headed nāga who shook the earth with a thunderstorm while Sāriputra's incarnation into a garuḷa tore the nāga into pieces and ate it up. When Raudrākṣa became a big bull charging towards Sāriputra, the latter became a lion and devoured it. Then Raudrākṣa became a yakḷa with red eyes and long teeth, spewing flames from his mouth while Sāriputra became Vaiśravaṇa. The yakḷa was frightened and wanted to retreat but he was encircled by fire on all three sides with Sāriputra blocking the fourth side which had

remained cool. At this point, all the heretics surrendered and asked for pardon. In all the six rounds of the contest described above it was Sāriputra who emerged victorious. The two paintings highlight Raudrākṣa's panic-stricken expression in contrast to Sāriputra's composure. The artists have not painted each and every scene but have selected the most effective sequences to highlight the theme of the illustration. The entire scene is set in motion with the Wind God's opening up his Windbag and the canvas comes to life. A whirlwind blows towards Raudrākṣa's side and topples the trees. Then a fire rages along the direction of the wind. A huge tree is uprooted and a golden drum blown away. Raudrākṣa's throne is about to fall down although his disciples are trying hard to prop it up. The heretics are driven to the end of their tether by the wind and finally have to surrender one by one and come to Sāriputra to be ordained into monkhood. The contest of magical powers culminating in the conversion of the heretics to Buddhahood is decided by a gust of wind, leaving a deep impression on the viewers. The entire sequence is one of the most remarkable achievements of ancient painters.

The illustration of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra is based upon the text of *Dacheng rulengjia jing* (Vimśatikavijñāptimātrāsiddhi-Sūtra).<sup>21</sup> Although the Sūtra is primarily concerned with philosophy and theology, there are vivid scenes that have been illustrated. At the centre of the mural is the Laṅkā Buddha surrounded by 60 odd scenes. For instance, one painting shows a butcher selling meat and a dog is seen gnawing a bone under the butcher's table. This illustrates the observation in the chapter of "duan roushi" (Giving up meat-eating): "Selling the flesh of dog, horse, man, cow for the sake of profit is such a filthy business. How can one eat such things?" There is another picture of a man putting on his turban and robe before a mirror. This is meant to illustrate another observation in the chapter of "ji yiqiefa" (collecting all the dharma): "Dharma is like an enlightened mirror which does not discriminate. It shows various ramifications of the truth according to different conditions of the laity." We find here abstract theology being first explained in a tangible way and later being illustrated by painting to enable the devotees to grasp the theology.

A theme which is rare among the murals of the Tang Dynasty is that of Māra-Vijaya. The illustration of Māra-Vijaya first appeared on the ceiling of the outer room of Cave No. 156 during the sixth year of the Xiantong Era (865). Though the composition is similar to the paintings of the same theme in the earlier periods, the faces and costumes of the characters have undergone a change. The king of Māra looks like an old general in Chinese costume. The females under him resemble the beauties of the Chinese palaces. Three of the females attempt to distract Śākyamuni by singing and dancing. The latter uses his magical power to transform them into three ugly old women. Wild with anger, the Māra king commands his soldiers to mount an attack on Śākyamuni but they are unable to break through the lotus protection which Buddha has around himself. Finally, the Māra king is shown without his crown and boots, in a very bad way. The mural tallies perfectly with the description of "pomo bianwen" (The Story of the Destruction of Māra).<sup>22</sup>



Cave No. 85, Late Tang

Sūtra illustrations added to their content during Late Tang. For instance, the illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka has as many as ninety-four title inscriptions while the illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa has more than fifty of them. Both scenes of real life as well as abstract pictures of preaching have been added in large numbers. This often results in a painting becoming overcrowded, unwieldy and disorderly in contrast to the illustrations of the earlier phases of the Tang Dynasty which only highlight the main themes and are distinguished by structural refinement and precision as well as by magnificence and grandeur.

## 2. Story Paintings

Independent story paintings were discontinued for an interval of 100-odd years when the Mahāyāna school was dominant. The Tibetan occupation brought its appearance in the form of screen paintings. Only a few themes such as Kalyāṅkārī entering the sea and Prince Sattva feeding himself to the tigress figured on the wall behind the stucco statues inside the niche to fill in unused spaces. During the Zhang Yichao Era, certain caves (for example, Cave No. 85) started to feature screen paintings based on *Xianyu jing*. Amongst them, some twenty themes have appeared for the first time in Dunhuang murals: for example, the chapters on "Conversation between Sea God Nanda and boat passengers"; "Gangadatta"; "Charity-giving from the magic vase"; "Golden Heaven"; "Santanning", etc.



Avalokitesvara, Cave No. 14, Late Tang upper portion.

The painting of the "Santanning" story depicts a fairy studying dharma in the mountains of Vārāṇasī at a time when the city was visited by a drought with many people suffering from hunger. There was an elder named Santanning who provided food for one thousand "mobile fellows" and another one thousand "disabled" people for which he employed five hundred cooks. After some time, the five hundred cooks started grumbling. One day, the fairy told the old man that it was going to rain and he should plant immediately. The old man did so. Soon, the grain ripened and turned into melons. It was later discovered that every melon was filled with grains. The elder's granary was full to the brim. He distributed the surplus among his relatives and the people of the country. Realizing that virtuous deeds beget a generous reward, the five hundred cooks repented and were eventually turned into Arhats by the fairy. The lower portion of this painting has been damaged and a part of the details of the story is preserved in the

## 3. Tantric Paintings

During the second half of the Tang Dynasty, tantric paintings appeared in large numbers. Tantric images/dunhuang were introduced during Early Tang, with the appearance of several paintings of the Ekādasamukha (eleven-headed) Avalokiteśvara. This figure was then created in 776 during High Tang in Cave No. 148 in a combination of painting and stucco. Tantric images/dunhuang gradually grew in number during the Tibetan period and assumed prominence after the recovery of Hexi by Zhang Yichao. Cave Nos. 14, 54 & 161 have Tantric images/dunhuang in the Tang style.<sup>23</sup> The Avalokiteśvara in Cave No. 161 is a deity of enchantment, unique in its free composition. Cave No. 14 houses hosts of Sahasrabhuja, Sahasranetra Avalokiteśvara, Sahasrabhuja, Sahasrapātra Mañjuśrī, Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara, VajraAvalokiteśvara, Ekādasamukha Avalokiteśvara among others. All the figures are accompanied by attendants. The upper portion of the painting features flying figures with a Devarāja and a Bodhisattva in each of the four corners. The lower portion features ferocious mingwnags (fierce spirits who are the messengers and manifestation of Vairocana's wrath against evil spirits). The eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara is sitting in paryāṅka-bandha on the lotus throne: some of the faces show compassion, others anger. There are forty hands to each face, and a compassionate eye in the palm of

each hand. The deity holds in his hands a wheel, a ratna, a vajra, an axe, a rope, a knife, a sword and various other weapons. Beneath the lotus throne is Mount Sumeru with the sun and moon hanging above it. Half-way down the mountain slope we see two dragons, and at the foot of the mountain is a lake of blue waves. The expressions of characters are varied; the whole scene creates a mystic feeling. The illustrations of Avalokiteśvara include some eleven-headed Avalokiteśvaras, flanked on both sides by various buwangsi (characters who deserve to die).

The Tantric statues in the second half of the Tang Dynasty are endowed with the qualities of a dancer. This is particularly true of the Bodhisattvas who wear towering crowns and garlands all over their bodies. They are in graceful dancing postures even as they fly in the air. This new type of characterization clearly draws its inspiration from India. The Indian influence must have been introduced by the three Indian Tantric Masters who had come to Chang'an to propagate Tantrism during the Kaiyuan Era, and particularly Amoghavajra who had visited the Hexi area.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4. Auspicious Symbols**

Auspicious symbols at Mogao developed further during the Zhang Yichao Era. Paintings of Buddhist historical stories which had emerged earlier now combined with pictures of the auspicious symbols to create a complicated composition. Such compositions are mostly painted on the ceilings of the passages. On the flat top in the passage are painted Buddhist stories such as the water and fire tanks of Nepal, Aśoka building the stūpas, Vaiśravaṇa churning the ocean, stone statues of Buddha floating on the river during Western Jin, Gao Li finding the Golden Buddha statue during Eastern Jin, and the Buddha image emitting light in the temple on the cliff of the Gośṛṅga Mountain (the last theme was painted only from Late Tang onwards).<sup>25</sup> All these stories were combined to form one painting. On the slopes on either side are painted a large number of separate auspicious symbols neatly arranged in rows. The artistic standard of these murals is much inferior as compared with similar paintings of the first half of the Tang.

#### **5. Portraits of the Donors**

The portrayal of donors was greatly encouraged during the second half of the Tang Dynasty by the family regimes at Dunhuang and neighbouring areas. In the Hexi region there were the ruling families of Zhang at Nanyang, Song at Guangping, Li at Longxi, Suo at Julu and Cao at Haozhou, related to each other through matrimonial alliances, and forming a hereditary oligarchy with widely spreading tentacles. Their political power ensured further control over religion. As overlords of the monasteries they were empowered to grant licences for the ordainment of monks. Since they provided funds to build caves, they had their own images/dunhuang cast in the caves. The monks also eulogized them and made their portraits; for example the portraits of Zhang Yichao in Cave No. 85 and of Suo Xun in Cave No. 196 illustrate the point.

Portraits of the donors of the period often included three generations of a joint family with all relatives arranged in the same composition. For example, the door of the east wall in Cave No. 156 has a painting of the entire family of Zhang Yichao, his elder brother Zhang Yitan with his family and their parents along with portraits of monks and nuns. In the passage of Cave No. 138 there are the portraits of Zhang Chengfeng and his family. Although the inscriptions have faded, the portraits of the female donors in the main hall are still very distinct. Zhang Chengfeng's wife, with the maiden name Hu, his daughter-in-law, niece, grandson as well as his sisters who had already become nuns were all lined up the same cave. Gone were the days that the portraits of the donors figured in the caves to express their devotion to Buddha. Now they appeared primarily to record their genealogical tree, with the specific purpose of bringing glory to the families. Usually male donors figure on both sides of the passage: they wear a turban and a brown robe and carry a tablet in the waist, in the style of distinguished officers of the imperial court. Female figures are found inside the room; they have their hair tied in a bun and wear skirts and shirts ---

in the manner of high society ladies. In comparison, the figures of accompanying maids look humble and inferior, dressed simply and devoid of decorations. The contrast underscores the socio-economic differences between the two groups.

The two paintings, featuring Zhang Yichao and his wife on a journey, which cover the lower portion of both north and south walls and extend up to the lower portion of the east wall in Cave No. 156, are masterpieces of the Tang Dynasty portraiture of donors. There are over a hundred characters in each of the paintings. The scenes are grand with a well-knit structure. The inscription on the south wall reads: "The Governor of Hexi of the rank of Minister of Justice, General Zhang Yichao, on his journey to assume governorship of the territory recovered from Tibetan occupation." The painting starts from west featuring cavalry riders beating a big drum and blowing the horn. There are two columns of soldiers in full armour holding tridents, including warriors of non-Han nationalities. Following them is the army band of ten musicians playing the lute, harp, flute, waist-drum, big drum, etc., a typical Tang Dynasty standing band. There are eight dancers in two rows wearing Chinese and Tibetan costumes respectively. They perform the sleeve dance. Behind them are two cavaliers holding banners showing that the travelling dignitary is a governor. There are two rows of bodyguards holding swords along the bridge. They wear hats with woven designs, short coats, white trousers and black boots and carry swords with a long handle under their arms. The inscription identifies them as "Officials with the silver sword"; they are probably the guards of honour of the Tang. In the centre of the picture we see Zhang Yichao crossing the bridge on a white horse, flourishing a whip. He wears a turban and a brown robe. Placing the main character in such a special scenario as crossing the bridge is not only an indication of his status, but is also intended to highlight the theme.<sup>26</sup> Zhang Yichao is followed by a bevy of attendants. The inscriptions also indicate the presence of "army of our own brothers and sons" (*Zidibing*) and "commanders" (*huiya*). In the rear are team hunters and camels and horses carrying articles of daily use.

On the opposite side, on the north wall, is a matching "Picture of Madam Zhang Yichao on her journey"; the inscription titles it as the "Picture of Lady Song of Henei Province in the State of Song". Starting from the west, we have a scene of an acrobatic show performed with long poles --- a typical Tang sport. There is a four-member band: one playing a flute, one clapping bamboo pieces, the third carrying a big drum on his back and the fourth beating it. Another robust acrobat has a long pole standing on his head on which four kids are performing astounding feats. Following them are columns of musicians and dancers. The seven-member band play the flute, lute, waist-drum and other instruments. The four dancers form a square dancing with their sleeves. Behind them there is a white horse drawing a cart. The inscription reads: "Luggage cart of Lady Song". Below these figures we see two riders on horseback. Behind the luggage cart there are three square pavilion-shaped palanquins with an inscription saying: "Palanquins for the young ladies", indicating that they are Lady Song's daughters. Behind them is a white horse drawing a chariot; the inscription simply says "Chariot", it is presumably a standby chariot in Lady Song's entourage. In the centre of the painting appears Lady Song, riding a white horse. She wears a long-sleeved skirt. Her hair is richly decorated with jewels. Behind her comes a group of rider-attendants holding a toilet-case, a fan, a musical instrument, and a mirror. These are the Lady's maids. At the rear, there are hunters with their hounds, camels carrying wine jars and ceremonial horses fitted with halter and saddle. This painting bears evidence to the extravagant entourage of travelling aristocratic ladies of the period.

The paintings of Zhang Yichao and his wife on their travels reflect the real life of historical characters. They have a structure which has clearly inherited the Chinese tradition of tomb murals and have little or no relation to Buddhism in terms of content. However, they are masterpieces of realistic mural paintings eulogizing heroic characters.

## Conclusion

On the whole, the art of the second half of the Tang Dynasty has shown characteristics which are different from the earlier period. The works of the first half of the Tang Dynasty are clearly superior to those of the second half, in their depiction of power and health, in vividness and vitality. However, the art of the second half was essentially a development of that of the first half; it is in certain aspects that the former has surpassed the latter. For example, the murals of Mid-Tibetan period, show mastery in using line drawing to express the sense of quality, as also superiority in the achievement of well-knit compositions. They depict characters with detailed and in-depth feelings and have attained an exquisite, elegant and graceful style. The large canvases figuring both deities and the laity reveal a distinct breakthrough in painting technique: forceful strokes in the making of elevated expressions and a light mood as typified in the illustration of Mahāparinirvāṇa in Cave No. 158. On the whole, the Zhang Yichao Era provided a richer fare in the themes of the murals although the compositions are not equally rich in imagination and mood. The illustrations of sūtras show an obvious danger of stereotyping. However, works such as the pictures of Zhang Yichao and his wife and of Lady Song travelling are of undoubted excellence.

The composition of sūtra illustrations during the second half of the Tang Dynasty was basically an adoption of that of the first half of the dynasty. The Tibetan period introduced a new form of screen painting. The screen painting in the lower part of the wall was integrated with the sūtra illustrations in the upper part to form a new composition which continued up to the Song Dynasty.

Line drawing too underwent continuous changes. The powerful orchid-leaf strokes were gradually replaced by refined, pliant and pretty lines. Initial sketching was done with light ink, followed by colouring; finally, the contours were outlined either with thick ink or ochre-red. The finalizing contour lines are fluent and natural, elegant and graceful. It is the artistic deftness and the sensitivity to characterization which presents to the viewers the handsome faces of the figures, their delicate skin and loose flying scarves, all rendered to make them enchanting and graceful.



Cave No. 9, Late Tang

More remarkable is the new development in colouring. Several incomplete caves from the Tianbao Era got completed by the beginning of Middle Tang. There was a wholesale use of ochre-red or different shades of red by mixing yellow and black. The tone is dull and monotonous. With the passage of time, however, colouring was gradually enriched. In Cave Nos. 112, 154, 158 and 159, we see magnificent colours, bright and elegant. During Late Tang, the background had a wash of yellowish brown or pale white; the colour tones acquired an added softness and warmth.



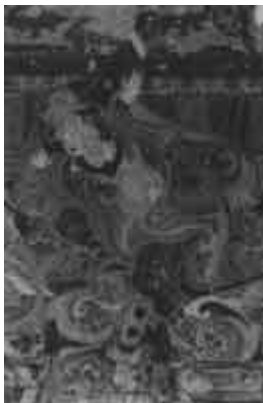


New characteristics are evident also in the depiction of the spiritual outlook of characters. For example, the celestial musicians in the illustration of Mañjuśrī on the west wall of Cave No. 159, in groups of three, exhibit a rich variety of moods, as they show the musicians engaged in performing with bamboo-clappers, lute, pipe (sheng), and so on. Particularly the sheng player is shown in meticulous detail, intense in his concentration. One of his toes under the long skirt is raised up as if keeping time with the beat. Appreciating this silent painting is like viewing a piece of beautiful music, the rhythmic tones of which almost thrill the viewer.

Celestial Musicians in Manjusri Sutra,  
Cave No. 159, Middle Tang (Tibetan  
Period)

The painting of Ānanda begging for milk in the illustration from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra (Chapter on Buddha's disciples) in Cave No. 159 is also exceedingly lively. A young girl is shown in an outdoor scene milking a cow. The cow stands motionless responding to its mother's call, while an impatient calf is struggling to get at its mother's milk but is restrained by a young man at the foot of the wall. Through this scene of tension, the affection between the milch cow and her calf is brought out beautifully. In the painting of Zhang Yichao's wife, Lady Song travelling, the acrobat balances a long pole on his head. Although his face is not clearly drawn, he is concentrating on the kids performing daring acrobatic feats on top of the pole, and is trying to keep the pole steady. His tense mood has been vividly brought out.

Besides the above-mentioned aesthetic features the Mogao art of the second half of the Tang Dynasty has certain refreshing features in content and theme. These may be briefly discussed below:



(1) The caves are modelled on Chinese palace construction showing a further sinicization.

The cave structure during the Tibetan period is a modified version of the style of the Tianbao Era. The niches show a transformation from the tent shape into a square shape with an inverted dipper ceiling. Inside the niche is a low Buddha seat in the shape of a horse-shoe, and a statue is placed over it. Behind the statue is a painted screen. The screen was a thing of daily use for the Chinese rulers and higher officials from the Han Dynasty onwards. Generally, a screen comprises six folds with human stories painted on it and is kept behind the seat of its owner. Obviously, the painted screen behind a Buddha statue is an imitation of Chinese lifestyle.

Dancer, Cave No. 112, Middle Tang

This niche style became a set pattern during the Tibetan period and continued till the end of the Tang Dynasty among the Mogao Grottoes. During the Zhang Yichao Era, in certain caitya caves, the inverted dipper-square niche was shifted onto the central column and became what was known as "chaxin neikhan" (inner shrine of the stūpa) so that gigantic illustrations of sūtras could be painted on the main wall. In a few caves, a big Buddha altar was built in the centre of the cave; over the horse-shoe shaped Buddha seat on the altar is placed a giant painted statue. Behind the main deity was painted a "rear

screen" extending upto the ceiling. On the lower portion of the four walls were painted sūtra stories in the spaces of interconnected screens. Both the rear screens which were in imitation of "fan-faced" wall (*shanmian qiang*) and the interconnected screens were decorations commonly seen inside Chinese palaces. We find that the historical monuments from the Liao and Jin Dynasties (10th to 13th century) often have a "xumizuo" (Mount Sumeru-throne) and temples. Behind the throne is the "fan-faced wall" or a huge screen which is quite similar to the layout of the caves we have just described. It is thus clear that certain cave structures of the Zhang Yichao Era were modelled exactly on Chinese wooden architecture, particularly on the style of palace architecture. This was an important manifestation of further sinicization of the Tang Dynasty Buddhist art.



(2) The increase in the number of sūtra illustrations in the Dunhuang Grottoes was a reflection of the mushrooming of Buddhist sects in heartland China.

Cave No. 196, Late Tang

It is recorded in the fragment of an official document belonging to the fourth year of the Kaiyuan Era (716): "The Tripitakas, a largesse of the emperor to Shazhou, earlier had many volumes lost which have not been traced till today. Shazhou requests the imperial court for the replacement of the lost volumes."<sup>27</sup> Various sects that sprang up in the heartland had already spread to Dunhuang in the first half of the Tang Dynasty either through the imperial court giving away the scriptures as largesse or through Dunhuang's request for scriptures. Eminent monks from "heartland" China, such as Xuanzang and Wukong, went to the Western Regions via Hexi while Dharmakṣema and Gunabhadra (also known as "Moheyan") came to Shazhou from Chang'an to translate the scriptures. The eminent monks of the Yanxing Monastery of Chang'an were often invited to Dunhuang to lecture on the sūtras.<sup>28</sup> Around this time, Amoghavajra was preaching Tantrism in Hexi. In addition, painting samples for sūtras produced in the "heartland" were brought to Dunhuang. As a result, there was a major impact of Buddhist thoughts and art on the Dunhuang caves. The concept of "Pureland" which was in vogue in Chang'an became an inspiration in the Dunhuang caves during the first half of the Tang Dynasty. By the time of Tibetan occupation, not only the "Pureland sect", but also the "Vinaya sect", the "Esoteric (Tantric) sect", "Huayan (Avatamsaka) sect", the "Chan (Dhyāna) sect", the "Weishi (Dharmalakṣeṇa) sect" and even the ephemeral "Sanjie sect" had spread to Dunhuang. Consequently, during the second half of the Tang Dynasty, all caves, big or small, were enshrined with various sūtra illustrations. Even the smallest caves in which a man can hardly enter have three or four such illustrations. As it is observed in the Tableau of Zhang Huaishen, "the variety of themes in the cave paintings is a reflection of the various schools of teaching of enlightenment", or, "an entire universe is housed in a single cave". The increased number of sūtra illustrations and rich contents of Dunhuang art thus mirrored a broad range of social life and created scenarios full of the living rhythms of the time, providing us with visual research materials for the study of contemporary history of that period and state of affairs of various sects of Chinese Buddhism.

(3) Expression of the orthodox Confucian thinking of loyalty and filial piety in the themes of Buddhist art during the second half of the Tang Dynasty.

During the Tibetan occupation, illustrations from *Bao'en jing* began to appear among the Mogao Grottoes. This was followed by the appearance of illustrations of Bao fumu enzhong jing and of the story of the

conversion of the heretic Raudrākṣa. Their emergence had a certain historical background.

After the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Eras the Tang empire began to show signs of disintegration. In order to support the ruling feudal patriarchal system, the Tang rulers showed special enthusiasm in promoting the Confucian teachings of loyalty and filial piety and in further merging it with the Buddhist ideology. After Indian Buddhism spread to China, already a fertile ground for Confucian ideology, it was inevitable that the Buddhist realm be influenced by the Chinese norms of loyalty to the monarch and piety to one's parents.

After the Tibetan conquest of Hexi, conflicts between the different nationalities became acute. The subjugated Han and other nationalities launched a struggle against the Tibetan aristocracy by pledging loyalty to the Tang monarchs. It was under such specific political situation that an upsurge of loyalty to the monarch and filial piety unfolded in the Hexi region, specially in Shazhou. The upsurge directly influenced the construction of caves at Dunhuang and was one of the historical reasons for the appearance of illustrations of *Bao'en jing* and *Bao fumu enzhong jing*.

After the recovery of Hexi by Zhang Yichao, the illustration of the story of Raudrākṣa made successive appearances, mirroring the feudal orthodox thinking. In the long history of China's feudal society, only the heartland Han Chinese regime was recognised as orthodox while the minority nationalities of the border regions were often branded as "manyirongdi" (barbarians). This automatically agreed with the orthodox section of Buddhism, which regarded all the 96 religious schools of the same period as heretics who should be made to surrender. Both these orthodoxies merged in the specific historical environment of Hexi. The murals of the Mogao Grottoes not only indirectly expressed the celebration of victory over the Tibetan domination through the illustration of Raudrākṣa but also placed their hopes on the perpetuation of this victory. But even after the Zhang family recovered Hexi, Dunhuang remained as an oasis surrounded by hostile non-Han nationalities,<sup>29</sup> and the Han regime could not be perpetuated. The illustration of Raudrākṣa along with the story written in bian-wen literature became an extremely effective means of propaganda for resistance against the invasion of minority nationalities and for consolidation of the Han regime. The illustration of Raudrākṣa appeared with great frequency during the two successive regimes of Zhang and Cao families, but disappeared entirely during Western Xia period. Parallel to this was the fact that in the Tibetan period the ruler of Tibet was shown as the leader of all other nationalities among Buddha's devotees. However, this leadership position was immediately relegated to a secondary status no sooner than Zhang Yichao's recovery of Hexi. Thus, the rise and fall of the themes of the sūtra illustrations is not a matter of accident but is intimately related to the vicissitudes of political fortunes and social realities of various periods. Although the art of Mogao Grottoes during the second half of the Tang Dynasty was not as magnificent and resplendent as that of the earlier period, nevertheless it provides many new topics for deep research because of its increasingly closer links with the socio-political reality of historical times

*Translated by Sonu Agnihotri*

[From *Dunhuang shiku yishu lunji*, pp. 196-223]

## Dunhuang Art in the Last Phase



Interior of Cave No. 55, Song Dynasty



Cave No. 327, Western Xia

The Last Phase of the art of Mogao grottoes at Dunhuang comprised the Five Dynasties, the Song, Western Xia and Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty, spanning four hundred odd years. The period witnessed three regimes of different nationalities leading to great changes in social ideology and religious convictions. As each era left its distinctive imprint on the content and form of the cave art, we shall divide our discussion into two parts: the regime of the Cao family, and that of the minority nationalities, the Dangxiang and Mongol.

### I. The Cao Family Phase

In 907, in the wake of the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, Zhang Chengfeng's regime, known as the Western-Han Jinshan state also collapsed. Cao Yijin, an officer from Shazhou, replaced the Zhang family as the ruler of Dunhuang. In 924, Cao Yijin formally took over as commander of the "Guiyi" (Uprising) Army. This marked the beginning of a five-generation rule of the Cao family in the Hexi region. Although the area under its control went on shrinking and was finally limited to the two provinces of Guazhou and Shazhou besides the six garrison towns of Ziting, Xuanquan, Yonggui, Xincheng, Shicheng and Changle which were under its jurisdiction, the regime did control a vital strategic communication link for years, placing the Hexi region at a junction of intercourse between China and the West.

The Cao family always maintained cordial relations with "heartland" China, kept its calendar according to Chinese reigning eras and preserved the socio-political system and culture of "heartland". At the same time, the Cao family also entered into an alliance with the Uighur regime of Ganzhou in the western neighbourhood of Dunhuang. The bilateral relations were first on a "paternalistic" basis--those between the "son" (Cao regime) and "father" (Uighur regime), but subsequently developed into those between brothers. The Cao family also uninterruptedly exchanged envoys with Khotan in the West.

Cao Yijin married the princess of Uighur, and enlisted the Khotan King, Li Shengtian, as his son-in-law. This matrimonial alliance of a political nature was conducive to peace and stability. Besides this, the regime of Cao family also had frequent contacts with Liao (Khitan) and Jin (Nurthen) in the northeast and the Uighur regime of Xizhou in the west, living with them in harmonious co-existence. The wine bills of the Cao government office and the state-owned wine shops<sup>1</sup> give us a glimpse into the busy traffic between Dunhuang and Khotan, Xizhou, Ganzhou and Uighur. This is also a reflection of the thriving conditions along the Silk Road. The Dunhuang Bianwen literature as well as contemporary songs show no lack of eulogising of Cao Yijin.<sup>2</sup> Even if we give due allowance for flattery and exaggeration, there is no doubt about the stability and prosperity of Hexi region under the Cao family.

Cao Yijin regarded Buddhism as a "sacred power" and considered it necessary to depend on "devotion for Buddhist reasoning and admiration for the Compassionate One" for ensuring stability and law and order.<sup>3</sup> Therefore he "invoked the blessings of Lord Buddha for the court, and set up shrines in the

mansions." He invited eminent monks to "open the holy books and chant the noble teachings."<sup>4</sup> Under his patronage Buddhism flourished greatly. After the death of Cao Yijin, his sons Yuande, Yuanshen and Yuanzhong carried forward their father's cause, "expanding and promoting Buddhism, paying homage to the holy rocks, giving away money before each of the innumerable deity images/dunhuang so that golden lamps are lit inside the innumerable altars."<sup>5</sup> Buddhist temples mushroomed within the jurisdiction of Shazhou. Names which figure in the accounts of the donors and other documents are: the monasteries of Shengguang (Holy Light), Longxing (Dragon Rising), Puguang (Universal Light), Bao'en (Repaying Indebtedness), Yong'an (Eternal Peace), Xiande (Manifestation of Virtues), Sanjie (Triloka), Qianyuan (Grand Beginning), Jinguangming (Suvarṇa-prabhāsa), Anguo (Peaceful State), Lingxiu (Built by the Spirits), Jintu (Sukhāvātī), Kaiyuan (Beginning of Era), Xiangguo (Pillar of State), Lingtu (Sacred Map), Dayun (Mahāmegha), Dachang (Mahāyāna), Liantai (Lotus-throne), Fengtang (Imperial Tang), Gaomiao baokan (Jewel-shrine of Sumeru), Gaomiao Guiyan (Solemnity of Sumeru), etcetera. The number mentioned here surpasses the 17 temples narrated in *Chongxiu beidaxian ji* (An account of the renovation of the northern giant Buddha).<sup>6</sup> According to the accounts of a document in Khotan script, when the Governor of Khotan was in Shazhou on an official mission, he visited 121 temples to donate money.<sup>7</sup> If this was the case, although a considerable number of these belonged to the category of small shrines, the number of temples at Dunhuang under the Cao family was greater than during the Tang Dynasty.

The Cao family constructed very many large caves and had murals painted on a kilometre-long open-air rock space. The Caos also repaired the caves and corridors of the caves and renovated many caves of the preceding dynasties. In 966 it renovated the northern giant Buddha. The work was personally supervised by the "Western King" and the Duchess of Liang, Madam Zhai of Xunyang. Madam Zhai herself cooked for over 300 workers engaged in the restoration project. In 949, on the 23rd of the sixth month, Commissioner Zhang Yinrun wrote a poem for the mural in the front room of Cave No. 108 which says:

Yesterday I visited the oasis,  
Flowers bloomed in the tanks of the valley.  
On one side, I witnessed brisk activity  
To restore the Buddhist caves to their ancient glory.  
This was the holy abode I am told  
Of the glorious deities of old.  
Auspicious flowers, trees and plants  
Used to be exuberant, splendid and grand,  
And celestial birds once frequented the place.<sup>8</sup>

The prosperity of the Mogao grottoes during the regime of Cao family has been sufficiently documented.

Besides the monks and nuns, skilled specialists were required to cut the caves, create the images/dunhuang and paint the murals for the construction of caves and temples. The Cao family emulated the practice of heartland China and established an Academy of Art for this purpose. Among the inscriptions for the donors in both the Mogao and Yulin grottoes we see accounts such as: "Artisans of the Shazhou and the Commissioner of the Art Academy"<sup>9</sup>; "Officer of the Military Command in charge of the painting materials"<sup>10</sup>; "Painted by the artisans of the first department of the Military Command"<sup>11</sup>; "Painters under the Military Command"<sup>12</sup>; "Painters and army officer in the main division of Military Command"<sup>13</sup>; "Painter"<sup>14</sup>; "Image-making artisan"<sup>15</sup>; "Calligraphers of First (left) and Second (right) departments of the Military Command"<sup>16</sup>; "Officer in-charge of engraving"<sup>17</sup>, as well as "Officer in charge of cave-cutting" and "Officer in-charge of cutting under the Military Command"<sup>18</sup>. The above inscriptions show that those employed in the Art Academy were masons, image-making artisans, painters and the commissioner who was in charge of the Art Academy. The wine bills of the Cao household accounted for the numbers of wine jars "paid to cave masons" and those "paid to the painters". The supply vouchers of

the department in charge of feasting of the government of the Cao family reveal the details of hospitality accorded to the workers: the painters and masons had "fine" quality of viands, while other personnel were issued "inferior" supplies.<sup>19</sup>

Among the *Dunhuang Manuscripts* there is "Jiedu yaya Dong Baode diu gongde ji" (Account of Colonel Dong Baode of the Military Command constructing Buddhist shrines)<sup>20</sup> which gives a vivid life sketch of Dong Baode who was a master artist:

"After Yuezun and Faliang started constructing caves at Dunhuang there has been a vogue of cave-making by the rulers and subjects, by the holy order and the laity....images/dunhuang such as that of Vimalakīrti --- noble with golden looks are housed in thousands of shrines. Like the celestial stars they shine in thousands of caves....In the day devotees frequent them on pilgrimage amidst the clouds of incense, and at night under lamp light on. As if this is the abode of Avalokiteśvara who demonstrates universal powers. It is as if everywhere we meet the reincarnation of the Mahāsattvas. In this valley flanked by mountain peaks, the magnificence of holy shrines beggars description. Within and without the caves, the wonderland of Buddhahood puzzles comprehension. There was Colonel Dong Baode who had noble aspirations and a gentle temperament, an example of an honest gentleman of compassion and proper conduct. He mastered the intricacies of colours, powder and ink. His paintings were comparable to the mastery of Zhang Sengyao and Cao Zhongda. Objects came to life in his sketches, and his paintings of Buddha images/dunhuang surpassed his predecessors' and it would be surely difficult for the future generations to match him. He was also conversant with Buddhist scriptures, and accomplished in Confucian norms and propriety. He was recommended to the King of the Cao family who had for generations ensured peaceful life and prosperity for both the holy order and the laity. The royalty was never tired of philanthropy and auspicious religiosity....Dong Baode served the noble cause while being generously rewarded. His family became affluent with provisions to spare. He consulted his colleagues (seniors and juniors) about repaying his indebtedness to the royal family while redeeming his devotion to the Enlightened One. They all agreed to dedicate themselves to the construction of the holy shrines....Dong Baode took the lead to build a temple at his former residence at the eastern entrance of the western lane of the northern street in Dunhuang city. He painted the four walls inside the temple and fitted bells in the four corners of the eaves. It was like a refreshing version of the palace of Maitreya, and an imitation of the magnificent stūpas built by King Aśoka...."

In this account, the painter comes out in flying colours.

Cave art during the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song Dynasty had certain unique features along with an integrated style owing to the overall planning and collective labour of a group of skilful artists and artisans.

The Cao family regime has left behind fifty-five caves; the inscriptions preserved in over ten of these caves, as in the table below, give us the exact date of their construction.

S. No.	Era	Cave No.	Particulars
1	Tongguang (923-925) (Late Tang)	98	by Cao Yijin in honour of his son-in-law, Li Shengtian, the King of Khotan
2	Tianfu (936-940) (Late Jin)	100	by the Uighur Princess Madam Li of Longxi

3	5th year of Tianfu to the 2nd year of Kaiyun (940-945) (Late Jin)	256	by Cao Yuanshen
4	2nd year of Kaiyun to 7th year of Kaibao Era (945-974) (Northern Song)	25	by Cao Yuanzhong
5	12th year of Tianfu (Late Jin) to 4th year of Xiande Era (947-957)	61	by Cao Yuanzhong <sup>21</sup>
6	3rd year of Guangshun (953) (Late Zhou)	53 & 469	by Cao Yuanzhong
7	4th year of Xiande (957) (Late Zhou)	5	by Du Yanhong
8	3rd year of Jianlong (962) (Northern Song)	55	by Cao Yuanzhong
9	7th year of Kaibao (Northern Song) to 5th year of Taipingxingguo (974-980) (Northern Song)	454	by Cao Yangong
10	5th year of Taipingxingguo (980) (Northern Song)	449	by collective funds
11	9th year of Taipingxingguo Hall of Devarāja(Northern Song)		by Cao Yanlu

In addition to these inscriptions, there are others which give an account of three different constructions of caves: Cave No. 427 constructed in the eighth year of the Qiande's Era (970); Cave No. 444 in the ninth year of the Kaibao Era (976); and Cave No. 431 in the fifth year of the Taipingxingguo Era (980).

The fairly large number of inscriptions preserved in the caves of the last phase as well as the considerable data available from the manuscripts of the period makes it relatively easy for us to date the caves in this period.

The typical structure of caves of this time consists of a central altar which had emerged during the Late Tang. The horizontal surface assumes a rectangular shape, while the altar shaped like a horse-shoe is slightly to the rear of the centre. The way to the platform is in front of the altar. Behind the altar is the rear screen. The ceiling which is decorated as a caisson is in the shape of an inverted dipper. All the four corners of the ceiling have a shallow concave surface on which is painted a Devarāja. Cave No. 100 has a rather unique construction with four Devarājas painted on the four corners of the ceiling; but there is no central altar and rear screen, only a big niche in the west wall.

The dimensions of the central altar are fairly large as in Cave Nos. 55, 61, 98, 108, 146, 256, among others. They are a continuation of Cave Nos. 16, 94, 196, 138 of Late Tang, with similar themes and layout.

Most of the caves excavated by the Cao family were at the lower level. After the Zhengde Era (1506-1521) of the Ming Dynasty when Dunhuang was occupied by Turfan, the statues, with few exceptions, were seriously damaged. Cave Nos. 55 and 261 are the only ones representing this period. Cave No. 55 of Song Dynasty has seven statues with Buddha sitting in padmāsana in the centre of the upper part of

the altar. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma are seated in lalitāsana. They have plump faces and natural postures. Devarājas with fierce looks trample the evil demon under their feet. Although lacking the artistry and sophistication of the Tang images/dunhuang, these images/dunhuang have by and large retained the Tang style.

The murals painted by the Art Academy of the Cao government have basically inherited the Late Tang plans with several additional features. There are mainly six kinds of mural paintings:

### 1. Illustrations of Sūtras

These are similar to the Late Tang illustrations which formed the major component of all paintings. Some of the important themes are listed below:



Lokapala, Cave No. 55, Song Dynasty

Theme of Illustration	No. of Paintings
Paradise of Bhaiṣajyaguru	29
Vimalakīrti	24
Paradise of Maitreya	19
Avatamsaka Sūtra	14
Devatā Sūtra	12
Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra	10
Bao'en jing	10
Fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa	10
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra	9
Western Paradise of Amitābha	9
Vīśeṣacintābrahma-paripācchā Sūtra	7
Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra	4
Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra	3
Ghanavyūha Sūtra	2
Bao fumu enzhong jing	2
Sarvadurgatiparīśodhana-ushnī-savijayadhāraṇī	2
Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra	1
Māravijaya Sūtra	1
Avalokiteśvara Sūtra	1



Of the nineteen themes listed in the table above, illustrations of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-ushnī-savijayadhāraṇī had already appeared in earlier dynasties, but now many new details are added.

After the completion of a mural by the "painter in charge" (*zhihuashou*), inscriptions were added by a "calligrapher in charge" (*zhishushou*). In the illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka in Cave No. 61, the introductory chapter, depicting the grand spectacle of Śākyamuni preaching attended by a crowd of over eighty celestial beings, is placed in the centre as usual. Around it we find seventy scenes of various episodes with sixty-eight inscriptions which include almost the entire contents of twenty-eight chapters of the Sūtra. The inscription of "piyu" (illustrations) chapter is written in verse:

Memory brings back my first lesson for Enlightenment,

My heart, caught fire of desires, is about to be destroyed;

The Illusory City of Hīnayāna ill fits my choice,

The Mahāyāna chariot is to deliver me from mental torment.

The verse is composed in the "bianwen" style which combines narration and song. Besides this, the illustration of Vimalakīrti has fifty-nine inscriptions. The illustrations of *Bao'en jing* and the Avatamsaka Sūtra have also more than forty inscriptions each. The increase in content is one of the distinctive features of the sūtra paintings of this period.

Yet another feature is that most of the specific contents have been based on the "bianwen" texts.

Illustrations of the story of the heretic Raudrākṣa are the biggest in scale among the sūtra paintings of the Art Academy of the Cao regime. These illustrations are rich in details and well-knit in composition. The one on the west wall of Cave No. 146 has as many as seventy-six entries of the inscriptions, and the rich details exhibited have exceeded the content of the text of the relevant Chapter of *Xianyu jing* (Sūtra for the Wise and Foolish) which is the Chinese source of the story.

Sometimes the text of the relevant bianwen is adopted for the inscriptions of the illustrations, as if the rich and colourful illustrations could only be matched with the literary texts which have undergone a similar process of expansion and colouring, i.e. the bianwen. However, because of various reasons, in particular the limitations of the artists in the Art Academy in both aesthetic cultivation and creative ability, the Sūtra illustrations during this period tended to become stereotypical.

## **2. Narrative Paintings of Stories**

Narrative paintings of the Hīnayāna stories had been in vogue during the early periods. After their disappearance for over 200 years, three or four such narratives appeared once again in the niches of the Buddha altars on the screen paintings during the period of the Tibetan occupation. During the period of Zhang Yichao, stories from *Xianyu jing* appeared in screen forms. The Art Academy of the Cao government inherited this practice and painted the same themes on large canvases. In a single cave there could be as many as 30-odd independent stories illustrated in a very different format very different

from the story paintings of the earlier periods.

For example, in Cave No. 98, the story of Gaṅgādatta's conversion to Buddhahood which is based on the chapter on Gaṅgādatta of *Xianyu jing* appears on the south wall.<sup>22</sup> According to the Sūtra, a minister who had no son went to the temple and prayed before the deity: "If I am granted a son, I will decorate your body with gold and silver and apply scent all over your temple. If I am not granted one, I will destroy the temple and desecrate your body with excrement." The temple god was frightened and Indra informed Buddha about this incident through Devarāja Vaiśravaṇa. Precisely at that time there was a king who was about to die. Indra ordered that he be reborn in the house of the minister. The minister got his son and christened him Gaṅgādatta. As the years went by, the son grew up and was inclined to enter Buddhahood. His parents did not grant his wish saying: "We are an affluent family with extensive property and you are the only son. You must inherit the family occupation." Gaṅgādatta was deeply disturbed and wanted to die and be reborn in a new world. He first jumped from a high cliff, then flung himself into water, and then drank poison, but he was not harmed in the least. Then, he contemplated of violating the law and of being put to death. One day when the Queen and her maids were bathing in the pool after having hung their clothes and ornaments on the trees, Gaṅgādatta slipped into the wood and stole their clothes and ornaments. The King was furious and took up his bow and arrows to kill Gaṅgādatta. Thrice, the arrows failed to reach their target, turning back instead in the King's direction. Frightened, the King threw the bow to the ground and allowed Gaṅgādatta his wish to enter the holy order. He even took him to the abode of Buddha. In the screen painting of Cave No. 98 we have the scenes of the minister visiting the temple and praying for a son, of the son growing up, of Gaṅgādatta jumping from a precipice, jumping into the water, of the Queen bathing in the pool, of Gaṅgādatta stealing the clothes, of the King's indignation, of the King shooting at Gaṅgādatta, of the King leading Gaṅgādatta to the temple to be initiated into monkhood and so on. Although this theme is to be seen in Cave No. 85 of the Late Tang, the later painting shows a richer and livelier depiction.

Another new theme is the story of the adventure of Taneja (*Xianyu jing*, Chapter on Taneja).<sup>23</sup> Taneja was a poor Brahmin who lived from hand to mouth. He borrowed an ox to till the small plot of land that he owned. He returned the ox to its owner, but left the animal without informing him that his work was through. The owner saw the ox but thought Taneja was still using it. Thus, no one took care of the ox, until it was finally lost. The owner took Taneja to the King to claim compensation. They had just stepped out of the house when they saw the King's groom chasing a runaway horse. The groom asked Taneja to block the path of the horse. Taneja threw a stone at the horse and broke its leg. The groom also joined the owner to take Taneja to the King. They came to the banks of a river, but did not know where the ferry was. Just then, a carpenter was wading through the river with an axe in his mouth leaving his hands free to lift up his clothes. Taneja approached the carpenter and enquired about the ferry. The carpenter opened his mouth to reply and dropped the axe into the river. The carpenter too joined the other accusers. On the way, Taneja felt hungry and thirsty. He went to the wine shop and begged for wine. When he sat on the cot to drink, he accidentally killed a baby sleeping under bedsheet. The mother of the child cursed Taneja and joined the party headed for the King's office. Taneja saw that he was in great trouble. He climbed a wall trying to run away. When he landed, he killed an old weaver who had been sitting on the other side. The son of the weaver also joined the crowd to go to the King for demanding compensation from Taneja. When the group passed the wood, a bird on the tree asked Taneja, "Please go and ask the King why I cannot sing as I should when I perch on other trees. It is only when I am on this tree that I can sing as sadly or merrily as I wish." The accusers produced Taneja before the King. After finding out what had happened, the King pronounced his judgement. He ordered that Taneja should lose his tongue because he did not tell the owner of the ox about the return of the latter's animal, but the latter should lose his eyes for seeing his ox but not keeping it under proper custody; Taneja should lose his hand for breaking the leg of the horse, while the groom should lose his tongue for calling out to Taneja for help; Taneja should lose his tongue for inquiring from the carpenter, while the carpenter should get his teeth broken for dropping the axe. The King thought that the mother of the baby was guilty for putting the

baby under the bedsheet of a cot meant for the customers of the wine shop to sit while Taneja was also guilty for causing the baby's death. He wanted Taneja to become the husband of the woman to give her another baby. The King also ordered Taneja to be the father of the weaver's son to compensate the latter's loss. Upon his judgement, all the accused withdrew their charges and worked out a reconciliation. Taneja was happy with the result. He also witnessed another dispute being resolved by the King. Two women were scrambling for a baby, both claiming to be the real mother. The King ordered that each woman should take a hand of the baby and pull it. He would award it to the winner. The woman who was not the real mother pulled hard, while the real mother did not, lest the baby be hurt. Thus the King recognized the real mother and restored the baby to her. Seeing that the King was so sagacious, Taneja told him about the bird's query. The King replied: "Under the tree on which the bird could sing well lies a big pot of gold. Since you are poor, you can go and get the gold." Taneja dug up the gold, bought land and became rich.

This is a story with many twists and turns, but the illustration in Cave No. 98 shows only five scenes, among which are the carpenter dropping the axe while trying to answer Taneja; Taneja crushing a baby to death while drinking in the wine shop; and the two women disputing over the motherhood of a baby.

Another new story about "Xianghu" (Protection of Elephant) and a golden elephant is also based on *Xianyu jing*, according to the story in the "elephant protection" chapter of the Sūtra.<sup>24</sup> The story says that an elder of Magadha had a son born to him at the same time as a golden elephant. His parents christened him "Xianghu". The golden elephant grew with the boy and moved along with the boy. Whatever the elephant excreted landed on the ground as gold. Xianghu often talked about this elephant with his five hundred companions when they shared with each other their family secrets. Prince Ajātaśatru was among the exalted companions. He thought, "When I become the King I will seize the elephant." Soon after he was enthroned he summoned Xianghu and his golden elephant to the palace. Xianghu's father warned his son, "Ajātaśatru is a cruel, ruthless and covetous person who even ill-treats his own father. He will not be kind to others. His aim in asking you to go to the palace is to grab your elephant." To this Xianghu replied, "No one has the power to seize this elephant of mine." Thereupon, father and son rode on the elephant and went to the king's palace. They were treated by the king with food and drinks. Then, Xianghu took leave of the king who asked him to leave his elephant behind. Xianghu agreed and walked out with his father on foot. After a while, the elephant disappeared into the ground and emerged out of the gate of the palace from the ground to carry his masters home. Later, Xianghu left home and became an ascetic in the jungle to escape the persecution of the king.

This is a story with a profound moral. The illustration of this story in Cave No. 98 has seven scenes: (1) the elder had a son born to him and the golden elephant comes to the house; (2) Xianghu and the golden elephant become inseparable companions; (3) Xianghu tells his companions about the golden elephant; (4) King Ajātaśatru plots to grab the elephant; (5) Xianghu and his father ride the elephant to the palace; (6) Xianghu takes leave of the king and leaves the palace, the golden elephant disappears underground and reappears outside the palace; and (7) apprehensive of the king's persecution, Xianghu becomes a monk. Finally, we have Buddha narrating Xianghu's story.

Apart from the new Jātaka and karma stories, the last phase of Dunhuang murals produced a special illustration about the story of Buddha in Cave No. 61. One hundred and thirty-one scenes appear on the lower portion of the south, west and north walls which include: Meghākumāra appreciating flowers; Dīpaṅkara Buddha giving instructions; a hunter shooting a deity by mistake; Prabhāpāla being reborn on earth; Māyādevī going on outing from the palace; Buddha born under the Palāśa tree; kings and princes coming to congratulate the holy birth with bands; Prince Siddhārtha creating a lotus in every step after his birth; Nāgarājas spraying water to bathe Siddhārtha; Devapālas escorting the Prince back to the palace; Prince Siddhārtha's mother passing away seven days after his birth; the Prince being brought up by his aunt; the Prince studying under a teacher; the Prince practising fighting skill on horse; the

Prince inspecting the countryside; the Prince meditating under a tree; the King building palaces of three different seasons for the Prince; singing and dancing in the palaces to amuse the Prince; princes of different states contesting fighting skills; Prince Siddhārtha piercing seven drums with his arrow, and his arrow piercing through seven pigs and falling into Hell; Siddhārtha throwing an elephant across the rampart; Siddhārtha selecting his spouse within the kingdom; Siddhārtha marrying the daughter of a minister; maids of the palace attending and entertaining Siddhārtha; Siddhārtha witnessing sufferings of old age, sickness and death outside the palace; Siddhārtha leaving the palace at midnight; the chariot driver returning to the palace with Siddhārtha's crown; Siddhārtha being tonsured; Siddhārtha exchanging dress with a hunter; Siddhārtha practising aescicism in the jungle for six years; the daughter of the village chief offering milk to Siddhārtha; Garuḍa snatching Siddhārtha's begging bowl and flying away; Bodhisattva (Siddhārtha) crossing the river Nairāñjanā and subjugating Māra Papiyan; five hundred birds flocking around Śākyamuni; two merchants offering curd and honey; Śākyamuni preaching dharma among the fairies; Śākyamuni preaching at Gṛdhrakūta; Sudatta spreading gold on the ground to build an āśram for Buddha; Śākyamuni preaching to the Nāgarājas; Śākyamuni's nirvāṇa under the sāla trees; Subhadra (the last disciple of Buddha) burning himself to death; mourning by all his devotees and animals; Upāli sending a message to Buddha's mother; Buddha coming out of the golden coffin to preach; the golden coffin being taken around the city; Buddha's jhapita (cremation) with aromatic wood; distribution of raka (relics) among the states and building of stūpas.... This is a gigantic composition among mural paintings of the last phase. We see new details which had not been shown earlier in the illustrations of Buddha stories. Moreover, every episode has an inscription written in ink. This demonstrates the influence of the Chinese painting style from the heartland as well as the profound tradition of Chinese culture and art.

### 3. Portrait of Donors

During the rule of the Cao family there was a tremendous increase in the painting of the donors' portraits. In the first phase, they left the unimportant spots above the doors or below the altars to occupy the corridors. During the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty the portraits began to appear on both the spacious walls of the corridor which eventually became the preserve of the portraits of the cave donors and the nobility. The most typical of such paintings is on the south wall of the corridor of Cave No. 98 where the portraits of father and sons of the Cao family are beaming at the Zhang family (their relatives through matrimonial alliance) on the opposite north wall.



In the main room on the east wall is a portrait of the King of Khotan, his queen and their attendants. Towards the northern side of the wall we have the Princess of Uighur together with members of the Cao family. Below the screen paintings on the south, west and north walls are drawn miniature images/dunhuang in a row. They are the officials of different ranks of the Military Command of the Cao regime. Never before had such a wide range of portraits been drawn at Dunhuang.

Uighur Princess, Cave No. 98, Five Dynasties

The content of the portraits exceeded the original intention of showing the patrons paying homage to Buddha. In Cave No. 220 on the north wall of the corridor are the portraits of Zhai Fengda's family tree which is in a class by itself, although the number of portraits is not large. This was originally the "Cave of the Zhai family", built in the sixteenth year of the Zhenguan Era (642) of Early Tang. Below the main altar is the portrait of "Priest Zhai Siyuan" and "Reverend Daoku of Dayun Monastery" (lay family of Zhai). During the Five Dynasties in the third year of Tongguan Era (925) of Late Tang, his ninth generation descendant, Zhai Fengda, painted the portraits of his entire family when he was engaged in painting a new version of Mañjuśrī. The former included his deceased father Zhai Huixin, uncle Zhai Shende, deceased elder brother Zhai Wenzi, younger brother Zhai Wenzheng, deceased son Zhai Shankou and his deceased grandson Zhai Dingzi. These figures represent the Zhai family of three generations. The portraits of these donors converted the caves into a two-in-one institution of both a clan temple and a Buddhist church.



Donors, Cave No. 220, Five Dynasties

The paintings are numerous and large, but mostly stereotyped. The male figures generally wore turbans showing corners, loose-sleeved robes, leather belts, black boots, with a tablet stuck in the belt. The female Chinese figures have their hair tied in a high bun with jewel hairpins, faces adorned with paper-cut decorations. They wear large sleeves and skirts with embroidered capes around their shoulders, and rounded high-heeled shoes on the feet. Because of the matrimonial alliances between Cao family and the Uighur rulers of Khotan, the images/dunhuang of the Uighur princesses appear in quite large numbers. The wife of Cao Yijin painted on the southern side of the east wall of Cave No. 61 is described in the inscription as "Madam Li from Longxi being the celestial princess of Qin whose King is the son of the sacred ruler of Great Uighur in the north". She has a high bun on her head tied with silk ribbons at the back, and wears a long gown with open collars and narrow sleeves, and embroidered shoes on her feet. This is the ceremonial dress of Uighur ladies. Because Cao Yijin claimed fraternal relations with the ruling brothers of Uighur and Ganzhou, some of Cao Yijin's daughters were also entitled "Celestial Princesses", and they don Uighur costumes. Generally speaking, the positions and sizes of the portraits are arranged according to the position and seniority of the individuals concerned.

The portraits of the King of Khotan, his queen and the attendants in Cave No. 98 make up a fine group of portraits with considerable historical and aesthetic value. The King of Khotan wears a crown adorned with the symbol of Great Bear. At the back of his head hang thin strips of red silk. He has a long nose, large eyes and tadpole-shaped moustache. He wears the dragon robe with a waist belt covering the knees. There are devīs supporting his feet. This is obviously emulating the style of Devarāja Vaiśravaṇa. In the notification of the earlier lamp festivals on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, this portrait was described as "Devarājas of huge portraits". Some other images/dunhuang were called "Devarājas of small

portraits". In a similar position on the east wall of Cave No. 454, there is a portrait with identical shape and costumes. The inscription beside the painting reads: "The sacred and enlightened Son of Heaven of the great dynasty and Mahāratna of Khotan Kingdom....owner of this cave." Here, the term "owner of this cave" is figurative.



Li Shengtian (King of Khotan), Cave No. 98,  
Five Dynasties

The real owner was Cao Yijin, but he had this cave cut in order to accumulate merit for his son-in-law, the King of Khotan. The attire of the King of Khotan is the *fafu* (ceremonial dress) of the Chinese emperors. In his *Shi Yutian ji* (My embassy to Khotan) Gao Juhui had observed, "The dresses of sacred rulers there are the same as in China."<sup>25</sup> This proves that there were close ties between Khotan, and the Cao government of Guazhou and China. The Queen wears a bejewelled headgear and costumes which are half Uighur and half Chinese. The inscription reads: "The celestial Queen Madam Cao of the heavenly empowered absolutely filial emperor, the grand politician and grand enlightened, one of the great dynasties of the Kingdom of Khotan showing her dedication to Buddha." Madam Cao was the daughter of Cao Yijin.

In Cave No. 100 we find pictures of Cao Yijing and his wife, the Uighur Princess, on their journeys, which are similar to the painting describing the journeys of Zhang Yichao and his wife of Late Tang. The illustration of Cao Yijing's journey is painted on the south wall with Cao Yijin wearing a turban showing corners, a brown robe and black boots. He is riding on a white horse and waving his whip. In front of him there is a band dancing and playing music and at the rear are the attendants, maids and slaves and the cavaliers of various nationalities of Uighur. The illustration of the Uighur Princess' journey is painted on the north wall with the princess occupying the central place, flourishing her whip as she rides on horseback. She wears a conical fur hat with broad brim, and robe with open collar and narrow sleeves. In front of her, there is a procession of music and dance; behind her are the maids and slaves, carriages, horses, and squarish pavilion-shaped palanquins. Through these paintings which exhibit the grandeur of the Cao family's entourage we see that after replacing the regime of the Zhang family, the Cao government enjoyed a fairly stable rule.

Besides political and religious factors, the popularity of portrait paintings during the Five Dynasties and early Song Dynasty was due to the existence of a large group of portrait specialists under the Art Academy of the Cao family. Among the *Dunhuang Manuscripts* we find a number of writings praising the artist's skill in portrayal. Cao Liangcai's portrait is praised as: "Colours in drawing which preserve the true appearance of historical figures",<sup>26</sup> emphasizing the demand for realistic portrayal. But most of the portraits extant in Cao family caves are stereotyped, excepting for the few which give expression to individual personality.

#### **4. Paintings of Buddhist History**

The Art Academy of the Cao family composed pictures around stories of Buddhist miracles in the first half of Tang along with the auspicious symbols of the second half of Tang. As in Cave No. 454, the paintings centre around Mount Gośṛṅga with the upper portion illustrating a stone statue floating in the river, and Gao Li's obtaining the metal image. The paintings in the lower portion show the Nepal fire-tank, the ancient well of Guṇḍa, the deity covering the sky with one hand, and Buddha subjugating the poisonous Nāga, all of which form a large-scale composition, painted on the ceiling of the passage. On the western slope are auspicious figures in groups of tens. The artists have worked on the subject of Mount Gośṛṅga with great industry. The painting shows a very high ladder coming out from the ox's mouth

leading straight to the shrine on top of the mountain. In Xuanzang's *Da-Tang Xiyuji*, Mount Gośṛṅga is described thus: "Two peaks rise with precipices on every side; a shrine is built in the valley in between. The Buddha image often emits light."<sup>27</sup> The painting agrees well with this account.

There are auspicious figures and portraits of "monks of magical power" (Shenseng) forming an integral part of the sūtra illustrations. Like the legendary monk, Liu Sahe, he either appears in a single image or in a story painting, or even in a giant canvas of story painting. In Cave No. 98, below the image of a large standing Buddha at the back of the rear screen-painting is a cavalier with bow and arrow, a red turban partially covering his forehead, chasing a deer in the mountain. Another warrior leads a horse; before him is a deer, with a monk standing next to it. This painting shows that Liu Sahe was originally a non-believer with a ferocious character, he was later captured by the spirits while he was hunting the deer. The *Dunhuang Manuscripts* have the following account:



Cave No. 98, Western Xia

"The monk's worldly name was Liu Sahe who hailed from Dingyang county in Danzhou province. He was fond of hunting and killed many deer. He died suddenly and was caught by the spirits and was produced before Yamarāja. On asking whether he had killed any deer, Sahe denied this immediately. Then all the deer he had killed were brought before him to testify. He then admitted his crime. Then, a voice was heard singing that Sahe would become a deer. He was instantly transformed into a deer and was shot by an arrow in the belly...."<sup>28</sup>



Devakanya in Manjusri-Sutra, Cave No. 61, Five Dynasties

The illustration of Liu Sahe's story in Cave No. 72 includes 30 odd pictures, with the following sequels: a headless Buddha statue appears at Qilijian; devout Devīs with flowers prayed and the head appears. People try in vain to construct ladders to instal the head on the statue. Liu Sahe takes a vow to instal the statue. The statue flies, riding on clouds towards Liu. Arhats pay homage to the statue. Foreigners come to steal the jewels of Buddha and set the temple on fire while the skies resound with the sound of thunder; Buddhas from all the ten directions get together and so on. These illustrations are based on Daoxuan's "Ji shenzhou sanbao ganting lu" (A collection of the Magical Effect of the Triple Jewels in China) which says: "During the first year of the Taiyan Era (435) of the reign of the Northern Wei emperor Taiwu, there was a monk Liu Sahe of Lishi whose deeds have been recorded in the biographies of eminent monks. He had travelled widely, and was at Mao county paying homage to the pagoda. He went to Nanjing to build the Aśoka stūpa there. After completing the work, he travelled northwest to Fanhe Prefecture, 170 *li* [approximately 85 kilometres] west of Liang Zhou. People were puzzled to see him paying homage to the distant valley of hills.

He then told that a Buddha statue would come out from the cliffs. If the statue was intact, the world would be peaceful. If there were defects in the statue the world would be chaotic and people would suffer. After 87 years, the first year of the Zhengguang Era (520) a thunderstorm shook the rocks and an 18 *chi* high [approximately six metres] statue emerged, exquisite in every way but headless. Masons were ordered to fit the head on the statue but did not succeed in doing so. So the monk's prediction came true. During North Zhou a miracle occurred a few miles away from Liangzhou city. Suddenly the rocks were brilliantly lit and people discovered that it was the Buddha head of the statue emerging which then took its place on the statue perfectly. For more than 40 years the head had been lying about a hundred kilometres away from the incomplete statue and in an instant they became one. Just then there appeared lamps and bells

flying in the air. In the first year of the Baoding Era (561) of Northern Zhou, the Ruixiang (Auspicious Statue) Monastery was established here."<sup>29</sup> This account more or less tallied with the painting in the cave. But one cannot but notice that the stories of Liu Sahe in the texts, whether in *Gaoseng Zhuan* (Biographies of Eminent Monks), or in *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (Supplementary Biographies of Eminent Monks), or in *Fayuan zhulin* (Jewel Forest of the Garden of Dharma), or in the hand-written manuscript of "Liu Sahe heshang yinyuan ji", are not comparable to this illustration in richness. Perhaps the illustration was an improved version of bianwen literature on Liu Sahe. The merit of the painting is reduced for want of the highlighting of the main theme; it looks like a gathering of various isolated scenes devoid of its integral harmony although it is very rich in content and every detail is vividly depicted.



Interior of Cave No. 61, Five Dynasties

Mount Wutai is regarded as the abode of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Beginning from Northern Wei it had already been visited with great reverence by Buddhist devotees. Many famous historical monuments had been built on the mountain. The "Map of Mount Wutai" is also a part of the paintings of Buddhist historical developments. The "map" first came up during the Tang Dynasty. During the Longsuo Era (661-663) of the Tang Emperor Gaozong, the monk Huiyi created a miniature sample of the "Map of Mount Wutai" which was quickly popularized in the country.<sup>30</sup> The first appearance of the Map of Mount Wutai in Dunhuang murals was during the Tibetan period on the west wall. Below the illustration of Mañjuśrī in Cave Nos. 159 and 361 there are screen paintings of the "Map" which must have been created during the Kaicheng Era (836-840). This should not be viewed in isolation from the fact that in the fourth year of the Changqing Era (824) the Tibetan government sent a mission to China for the "Map of Mount Wutai".<sup>31</sup> The size of the "Map of Mount Wutai" on the west wall of Cave No. 61 is exceptionally large, totalling forty-five square metres. On the map we see unending hills and peaks, with the five main peaks (the literal meaning of wu tai) standing out from the rest. The peak in the centre is the highest, with the inscription "The apex of Central Peak" flanked by "The apex of Southern Peak" and "The apex of Eastern



Peak" and the other two peaks. In between the Five Peaks large and small monasteries, temples and pagodas numbering about sixty-seven dotted all over the place, including the monasteries of Dafahua (Mahā-Saddharma-puṇḍarīka), Dafoguang (Mahā-Buddhaprabha), Dafusheng (Great Sage of Fortune), Dajian'an (Great Construction of Peace), Daqingliang (Mahānavatapta), Dawangzi (Great Prince), a total of sixteen main shrines. On the Central Peak there is the magnificent "Wan pusa lou" (Mansion of ten thousand Bodhisattvas) and the "Dasheng wenshu zhensheng dian" (Hall of the Real Body of Great Sage Mañjuśrī). At the site of Mount Wutai is still preserved the great hall of the Mahā-Buddhaprabha Monastery built in the eleventh year of the Dazhong Era (857) of the Tang Dynasty which is a precious monument of historical architecture in China.



Dhrtarastra: Guardian of the East, Cave No. 100, Five Dynasties



Virupaksa: Guardian of the West, Cave No. 100, Five Dynasties.

In the lower portion of the painting are also painted the cities of Zhenzhou (present Zhengding county in Hebei province), Taiyuan and those of the Wutai county. The canvas depicts thousand miles of territory with its natural environment and social customs and activities of the people. Here we see devotees journeying to the hills on a religious pilgrimage and envoys accompanying the tributes to the holy shrine as well as travellers and traders. We also see grass being cut, beasts drinking, people pushing the grinding-stone and pounding the rice. There are bridges and shops depicted realistically, making the painting alive with the activities of people. A cavalier leads the group; followed by servants carrying the tribute. The inscription reads: "Celestial envoy presenting tribute". There is also a depiction of "Envoy with tribute from Hunan province". Historical records tell us that Emperors frequently sent their envoys (hence "celestial envoy") to offer tribute to Mañjuśrī at Mount Wutai.<sup>32</sup> It may be seen therefore that the "Map of Mount Wutai" is based on historical reality.

Although the Map of Mount Wutai in Cave No. 61 belongs to the genre of religious propaganda of the deity's magical power, it differs from the illustrations of sūtras which are meant to create a mystical



Viruhaka: Guardian of the South, Cave No. 100, Five Dynasties

religious atmosphere. This is both a historical map, as also an excellent

composition of landscape and figure paintings depicting a famous scenic locality. In the painting we see lofty mountains, long flowing rivers, luxuriant woods, intersecting roads, prominent mansions of the holy shrines on the skyline. The clouds float leisurely as auspicious birds chirp and fly. The scenic beauty of the famous Buddhist shrine attracted countless pilgrims. When the Japanese monk, Ennin, visited the shrine in the fourth year of Kaicheng Era (839) he asked painting masters to draw a map of Wutai entitled "Wutaishan xianhuan tu" (Modern scene of Mount Wutai) and took it back to Japan. The expedition of the Wutai Map to Japan across the Pacific and to the Western Regions is itself a very important theme in Buddhist art.



Vaisravna: Guardian of the North Cave No. 100, Five Dynasties

## **5. Paintings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas**

Paintings of Buddhas and other deities during the Cao family rule have unique features such as the four great Deva Kings painted in the four corners of the ceilings so that they might be the guardians of the caves. The eight categories of supernatural beings (tianlong babu) are neatly painted inside the niche, standing guard on both sides. Giant images/dunhuang of Buddhas as well as the preaching Buddha are mostly drawn on the back of the screens. Other new themes are the eight great Nāgas in the company of Devarāja Vaiśravaṇa attending the Nata's sermon. The latter is found in a well-preserved condition in Cave No. 36. On both sides of the passage stand the eight great Nāgas with inscriptions reading "Dali longwang" (Nāgarāja of great strength), "Dahoulongwang" (Nāgarāja of loud roaring), "Chihua longnū" (Nāginī holding flowers), "Chixiang longnǚ" (Nāginī holding incense), etc.

The Nāgarājas are painted like warriors while the Nāginī are dressed like palace maids. All of them have a human body and snake's tail, swimming with ease in the sea. On shore we see high mountains and forest jungles, cascading waterfalls and flowing streams. This is a painting full of mystical flavour.



Cave No. 36, Five Dynasties

The murals of this cave were funded by the donation of the Senior Colonel Liang Xingde and his son during the Qingtai Era (934-936).<sup>33</sup> The "Gongdeji" (Account of Religious Dedication) says: "The painting shows Nāgarājas in the sea. Every time we look at them, they bring timely amrita to us, creating favourable monsoons according to farming seasons."<sup>34</sup> It is evident that these paintings of venerated images/dunhuang were linked with the phases of everyday life. Besides this, the north and south walls of this cave also have large-scale illustration of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. However, damages through the ages have left intact only a portion of these paintings in the western corners. The surviving portion which gives a glimpse of the portraits of the families shows a masterpiece typical of the murals of the Five Dynasties.

## 6. Decorative Patterns

They were mostly painted on the caissons, inside the haloes, on the borders and the carpets in the paintings. The major motifs are: circling dragons, circling phoenixes, parrots, peacocks, unicorns, lotus, flower clusters, triangular flower patterns, whirling patterns, bead-string patterns, pomegranates and vines in wave patterns, etc. The caissons are extraordinary from the conventional point of view. Often there is one huge canopy for the entire cave, which greatly strengthens the feeling of integrity and regularity of the caves.

The Art Academy of the Caos continued for about a hundred odd years through the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty, having already enjoyed its heyday and starting to decline after Cao Yuanzhong became the Garrison General.

## II. Regimes of the National Minorities

The Western Xia and Yuan Dynasties were the two regimes founded by National minorities of China's western and northern neighbours. In the eleventh century the upper classes of Dangxiang, who had their political bases at Liangzhou and Xiashou, first annexed Turfan and Uighur to augment their fighting forces, and then Shazhou, Guazhou and other ten provinces, establishing an empire "bordering the Yellow river in the east, the Yumen Gate in the west, the Xiao Gate in the south and controlling the Gobi desert in the north".<sup>35</sup> The Western Xia Kingdom lasted for nearly two hundred years, embracing the present-day provinces of Gansu, Shaanxi and Ningxia. During the Northern Song period, Dangxiang troops conquered Ganzhou. In the eighth year of the Tiansheng Era (1030), the ruler of Guazhou, Cao Xianshun, led his one-thousand-strong cavalry to surrender to the Western Xia.<sup>36</sup> In the second year of the Guangyun Era of Western Xia (corresponding to the second year of Jingyou Era of Northern Song) (1035), the Xia emperor Jingzong conquered Guazhou, Shazhou and Suzhou; henceforth Dunhuang became a part of Western Xia.



Cave No. 97, Western Xia

The rulers of Western Xia were good fighters. They resorted to force to subjugate the various nationalities within the kingdom on the one hand, and vigorously promoted Buddhism on the other to create a peaceful rule by means of the Buddhist medium. Li Yuanhao had himself studied Buddhism and was conversant with Xixia and Chinese languages.<sup>37</sup> The rulers of Western Xia had made requests to the Song Dynasty several times to purchase the "Chinese Tripitakas". They built numerous monasteries, temples and stupas to house the scriptures. They also invited monks of various nationalities to expound and translate the scriptures and printed and distributed them widely. In the eleventh year of the Renxiao Tiansheng Era (1159) of Emperor Renzong of Western Xia, Tibetan Buddhism was introduced in the kingdom. An eminent Tibetan priest, "Gexi zangsuobu", was invited to the Western Xia court and revered as the RCEj-Guru.<sup>38</sup> The Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang and the Yulin Grottoes of Anxi had experienced a spell of building activities during this period.

In 1227, Chengiz Khan of Mongolia wiped out Western Xia. In March of the same year he conquered Shazhou. In 1279, Kublai Khan ended the one hundred years of disintegration of China and established a great Eurasian Empire with Ulanbator as the centre. Upto the seventeenth year of Zhiyuan Era (1280) the Mongol government set up a headquarter at Shazhou and the Hexi Corridor was completely under the rule of the Mongolian nobility. The Mongol rulers of the Yuan Dynasty propagated Confucian teachings and attached importance to Taoism, in addition to energetically pursuing the policy of "equal weightage to the three teachings" and "using Buddhism to enlighten the heart, using Taoism to cultivate the body, using Confucianism to rule the society."<sup>39</sup> Besides this, they patronized also Islam, Christianity and Judaism. In the realm of Buddhism they tilted in favour of Lamaism. The famous Tibetan monk Basiba was invited to the Mongol court to become the Rāj-guru. He was made to handle the imperial seal to control the affairs of Buddhist institutions of the entire empire, being virtually an advisor to the Central Government of the Yuan Dynasty. Therefore, the Śākya sect of Tantrism prevailed throughout the country and also became current in Hexi Corridor. When Marco Polo travelled through north-west China, he saw the Buddha images/dunhuang of Ganzhou and described the biggest as having a height of ten steps along with other smaller ones. According to him, the statues were made of clay or stone, all exquisitely carved or moulded with a layer of gold applied on the surface.<sup>40</sup> He also said "the idols (of Dunhuang) and the devotees (Buddhists) used their own language."<sup>41</sup>



Up to the eighth year of the Zhizheng Era (1348) Chinese, Xixia, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Uighur scripts had been used for the mantras in the Mogao Grottoes. This shows that Dunhuang was the common home of various nationalities and their Buddhists. The epigraph where the mantra was engraved in all these languages was donated by King Sulaiman of Xi'ning and his ladies, princes, princesses and sons-in-law. They renovated the Huangqing Monastery and had new caves cut out. Because of the special position enjoyed by the Śākya sect of Tantrism, the Dunhuang caves during the Yuan Dynasty produced Tantric art of Tibetan style.

Bodhisattva and Bhikṣu, Cave No. 263,  
Western Xia



Cave No. 16, Western Xia

The rule of Western Xia and the Yuan Dynasty over Hexi lasted for almost three hundred years, and during this time more than eighty caves were constructed at Mogao. Of the seventy odd caves created during Western Xia, the majority involved the renovation of caves of the earlier dynasties, with very few new ones being cut. There were about ten caves created during the Yuan Dynasty, mostly new caves. The Western Xia did a fairly thorough renovation of the caves of the previous dynasties. Cave Nos. 246 and 263 were originally of Northern Wei origin. The central column of Cave No. 263 of Northern Wei was modified into one without any niche on three sides; only the eastern side has a large altar in the centre. Although the central column of Cave No. 246 had retained the niches on all the four sides, all the murals and statues were repainted and remoulded during Western Xia, so that it appears to be a completely new Western Xia cave. Because a large number of Western Xia caves at Mogao Grottoes was created by renovating old caves of the previous dynasties, no special characteristic of Western Xia emerged in the pattern and structure of the caves.

At the same time, the contents of the murals and the statues also adopted the Northern Song pattern. The newly cut caves of the Yuan Dynasty can be classified into three categories based on their pattern and structure: (1) a square cave with an inverted dipper ceiling; (2) a rectangular main room with a central column at the rear; and (3) a square main room with a round altar in the centre. The latter is typical of the pattern of the Tantric caves at Dunhuang. There are statues on the altar with the four walls filled with Tantric paintings.

The surviving stucco images/dunhuang of Western Xia feature Buddhas, his disciples and Bodhisattvas, etc. There are also statues of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratnasitting together to preach. They have a plump face and a smooth skin; the folds of their dresses flow smoothly, retaining the styles of the Tang and Song periods. The images/dunhuang of the celestial female worshippers of Cave No. 491, which were discovered during the archaeological excavations of the 1960s, have a simple and plain appearance, a broad forehead, with the hair tied in two rings on the sides. They wear large-sleeved shirt with cloud-shaped shoulders, a long skirt covering the knees, with tassels hanging from both sides. The dress called guayi was the ceremonial dress of the noble ladies of China. The statues are after the style of the Song Dynasty.

The murals of the Western Xia and Yuan Dynasties were many in number, consisting of four main categories: images/dunhuang of deities, Sūtra illustrations, portraits of donors and decorative patterns.

### **1. images/dunhuang of Deities**

The images/dunhuang of deities created during the Western Xia and Yuan Dynasties in a span of almost three hundred years can be further divided into non-Tantric and Tantric images/dunhuang. The non-Tantric images/dunhuang are those of Bhaiṣajyaguru, Avalokiteśvara, the sixteen Arhats and the "Moon-and-Water" Avalokiteśvara, etc.



The painting of the "Moon-and-Water" Avalokiteśvara began to appear from the Tang Dynasty onwards. In the Shengguang Monastery, in the courtyard south-east to the pagoda, is painted the "Moon-and-Water" Avalokiteśvara by Zhou Fang<sup>42</sup> who is honoured as the "creator of the "Moon-and-Water image".<sup>43</sup> The same deity appears in the silk paintings which were discovered from the same cave as that of the Dunhuang Manuscripts. The Bodhisattva wears a jewel-studded crown, and has his hair in a high bun with garlands on his person. He is seated on a rock in ardha-padmāsana. Behind him there is a back halo, a crescent moon and green waves.

Cave No. 97, Western Xia

Bai Juyi has praised the image of the " Moon-and-Water" in his immortal lines:

Appearing on pure, blue waves  
And amidst the brilliant light,  
A look at the deity's solemn face,  
The emptiness of life is realized.<sup>44</sup>

images/dunhuang of sixteen Arhats as the central theme of a cave was a trend which originated in Cave No. 97 cut in Western Xia. On the south and north walls are painted eight Arhats each, in sixteen square compositions. The Arhats each have their individual characteristics: the thick eyebrows, big eyes, long noses and deep-set eyes and various strange postures remind us of the historical comments on the sixteen Arhats drawn by the Chanyue Master of the Five Dynasties, Guanxiu: "These figures with thick eyebrows and big eyes, drooping cheeks and high nose, sitting on the rocks and leaning against the pine trees, sitting on the mountains and by the waterside, with foreign looks and Indian appearances, provide a feast of portrayal."<sup>45</sup> The Arhat images/dunhuang of Western Xia seem to have acquired a style of the "romantic and unrestrained" images/dunhuang of Guanxiu.

There are images/dunhuang of Mañjuśrī with thousand arms and thousand bowls seated in utkuṭukāsana on Mount Sumeru, every one of their thousand hands holding a bowl. From every bowl there emerges a Nirmāṇabuddha. The entire composition is in the shape of a wheel.<sup>46</sup> Mount Sumeru emerges prominently from the ocean, with two intertwined dragons holding it and the sun and moon on each side.

The thousand-armed and the thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvaras are different in expression and composition, depending on the date of their production by different artists. In the Zhizheng Era (1341-1368) of the Yuan Dynasty, one image of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara was created in Cave No. 3 in which there are a few other figures. There is Avalokiteśvara with eleven heads which pile up like a pagoda, while the thousand arms and the thousand hands form a wheel. "There is a benevolent eye in the palm of each hand."<sup>47</sup> As described in the bianwen literature of Dunhuang: "His thousand eyes observe the remote [sufferings of the people], while his thousand hands come to their rescue." The upper portion has flying figures; on either side are deities like Punyatara, Lakshmi, Vāsudeva, Ucchushma and Vināyakapainted realistically. Most of the figures have the images/dunhuang of China, some looking even like Taoist gods. The line drawing is skilful, with rich variations. Rounded, smooth and forceful iron-hard lines are used to sketch out the face and limbs and the body while folded-reel lines used for the heavy and thick pleats of the garments and broad top and thin end lines which can vary with their accents are clearly used to depict the lines of muscles of the warriors. Gossamer lines bring out the fluffy hair and

beard. In order to depict the different qualities, the artists judiciously varied different lines to make the figures vivid and moving. Their techniques clearly show the high degree of development in the art of the Yuan Dynasty.



Hevajredaprabha Buddha, Cave No. 61



Vasudeva, Cave No. 3, Yuan Dynasty

In Cave No. 61 on the south wall of the corridor there is the huge image of Hevajredaprabha Buddha (Buddha with light streaming from every pore). Most probably the caves were repaired during the Yuan Dynasty when this image was repainted. The Buddha in the painting is seated on a wheeled carriage with one finger of his right hand supporting the dharmacakra. In the front there are Devas leading the way while the dragon banners flutter behind them followed by Vajra warriors. The sky is filled with a multitude of Devas together with Nakshatra-rājas. The scripture says: "In the past Śākyamuni lived in Devapura and told Mañjuśrī and the other Bodhisattvas, Mahāsattvas along with the four categories of celestial inmates, the eight categories of supernatural beings, the Navagrahas, the seven brilliant stars, the twelve deities, twenty-eight Nakshatras, the sun and moon and all the constellations that,

"In the past I had gone to the abode of the King of sāla tree and obtained this dhāraṇī dharma of Mahāteja Suvarṇa-cakra-Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-Hevajreda-prabha-tathāgata to eliminate all disasters. If there are national boundaries in the future world, the sun and moon and the five stars, Rāhu, Ketu, devils and evil stars shine upon the universe and constellations under my jurisdiction...all disasters will be eliminated automatically, causing no harm to anyone."<sup>48</sup> The painting we have just discussed must have been closely related to the main statue of Mañjuśrī in the same cave.

The second kind of portraits of deities is the tantric painting in Tibetan style. The mural in Cave No. 465 is tantric art of the Śākya sect. We see Buddha of the Five Directions centring around Vairocana-

Tathāgata This cave also features the angry images/dunhuang of the "mingwang" (*vidyārājas*), and the joyful devas and joyful vajras in the form of a couple embracing each other. The *Vidyārājas* have fierce and vicious looks, dancing with naked bodies. Their figures are proportionate and drawn by refined lines, and coloured with three-dimensional effect. Murals of this genre have obviously been influenced by Nepal and India. They also contain elements of the indigenous Tibetan religion and give play to the unique style of the art of the Śākya sect.

## 2. The Sūtra Illustrations



Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha, Cave No. 310,  
Western Xia

From the time of Western Xia the Sūtra illustrations became increasingly fewer in number. There were only two or three themes like "The Western pureland paradise of Amitābha" and "The paradise of Bhaiṣajyaguru". The paintings lacked liveliness, the composition lacked variation. Some of the vivid elements of the sūtra illustrations of the previous dynasties like the magnificent pavilion, music and dance and so on became a rarity. Moreover, but for the sitting postures and *mudrā* of Buddha as well as the appearance of Aupapādaka Kumāras it would be virtually impossible to distinguish one sūtra illustration from another. Evidently, the sūtra illustrations of Mahāyānism were on the road to decline faced with extensive dissemination of Tantrism.

## 3. Portraits of Donors

After the Northern Song Dynasty there were fewer portraits of donors at Mogao. During the middle of Western Xia, there emerged some portraits of donors of Uighur nationality of which those of the Uighur King and his family in Cave No. 409 are portraits of their own style. The figures have plump faces. The King wears a white felt cap with dragon designs, a robe with circular dragons and long felt boots. Behind him are the attendants holding an umbrella and soldiers carrying weapons. The portraits of the lady show her wearing a hat richly adorned, an open collar, narrow-sleeved red robe. She is painted in a similar style and characterization as the Uighur donors found among the Beziklik caves of the Uighur period in Gaochang of Turfan. During the Western Xia, Uighur tribals spread all over the Hexi Corridor. There were Uighurs' Ganzhou in the east, those from Gaochang and Kuca in the west, there were local Uighurs in Shazhou in the fifth year of the Tianhui Era (1127). The Khan of Shazhou Uighur sent a tribute mission to the court of Jin (Nurčen) in north China.<sup>49</sup> The donor portraits of Uighur Kings left behind from Western Xia in the Dunhuang caves are also important cultural relics.

During the later period of Western Xia there appeared portraits of female donors belonging to the Dangxiang nationality. Their faces are long and thin. They wear hats with jewels hanging on the edge or hats made of fur. They also wear narrow-sleeved shirts and skirts and bow-shaped pointed shoes. This is more or less the modified version of the heartland Chinese fashion.

There are a couple of portraits of donors in the caves of Yuan Dynasty. Their faces are broad and plump. They wear big hats with a broad brim, a narrow-sleeved gown, boots for all seasons (*liulexue*). This is the typical Mongolian costume. The female donors wear the 'ququ' hats, embroidered dress, their robe is so long that two maids have to hold it to prevent it from sweeping the ground. This is the attire typical of



Mongolian ladies.

Although there were only a few portraits of donors of Western Xia and Yuan periods, they clearly reflect their national characteristics in dress and decorations.

#### 4. Decorative Patterns



Caisson Ceiling, Cave No. 400, Western Xia

The decorative patterns of the last phase of the Mogao Grottoes developed more or less on the basis of the work of the Art Academy of the Cao family and bear the new features of their times. The motifs include: peony, pomegranate, lotus, orchid leaf, cluster of flowers and other floral designs. There are other patterns of ancient coins, chains of rings, the curvature of the spinal column of the tortoise's back, lock, svastika, whirling lines and other geometric patterns. There are also auspicious designs like circular dragons, hovering phoenixes, rolling clouds and so on. Of these, the dragon and phoenix designs are the most prominent. The compositions of the rolling clouds and circular dragons, a couple of dragons playing with a pearl, five hovering dragons, a lone phoenix spreading its wings, a couple of phoenixes circling around are the motifs seen on the caisson, hat, robe and flag, emphasized by relief and gold wash. The ceiling in Cave No. 130 is a caisson shaped like a canopy adorned by golden dragons typical of the design of Western Xia. The corridor in Cave No. 61 which features the portraits of Hevajredaprabha Buddha with dragon banners fluttering behind the chariot also represents decorative art of the last phase.

#### Conclusion



Cave No. 99, Western Xia

After the Tang Dynasty, the cave art of Mogao entered its last phase which lingered on for more than four hundred years, and experienced four different regimes of three different nationalities: the Five Dynasties, Northern Song, Western Xia and Yuan Dynasty. All the rulers strongly patronized Buddhism and undertook uninterrupted cave building activities at Dunhuang. The creators of the cave art belonged to different nationalities, of whom the artists and sculptors of Han nationality were Dong Baode, Zhang Hongen, Li Yuanxin, Wang Ande, Li Cunzui. Those of Dangxiang nationality were led by artist Bao Chongde, while those from Kuca were led by Bai Banzhi. There were also Central Asian artist An Cunli and Indian artist Zhu Bao who had settled down in Dunhuang. This shows that Dunhuang cave art is in reality an art treasury created by people of various nationalities of China, absorbing the influences from foreign countries.



Cave No. 65, Western Xia

During both the periods of development of the last phase there were outstanding achievements and several prominent special features.

The Cao Art Academy during the Five Dynasties created many caves of large and medium sizes with a central altar along with statues and murals. They are rich in themes and well-knit in composition. The appearance of new themes like the episode of "Liu Sahe", "The Map of Mount Wutai" and illustration of Mañjuśrī in a new plot among others reflects the process of China's further internalization of Buddhism, fusing it with Confucian and Taoist thoughts. Because of the increase in the plots of the Sūtra illustrations and the reappearance of story narratives, the Dunhuang mural is enriched by detailed scenes of social life providing a rich visual source for the study of the social history of those times and places. In the early stages of the Art Academy, the line drawings were forceful, albeit rough. They still retained the boldness and ease, richness, smoothness and variability of the orchid-leaf lines.

Particularly in the characterization of the eight categories of supernatural beings, the ten great Buddha disciples, the brush shows power and a sense of flight mood with great inner strength. The Nāgarājas and the attendants of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in Cave No. 36 as well as Mañjuśrī in new design in Cave No. 220 consist of model works of art produced by Art Academy. Only from the time of Cao Yunzhong onwards lines be they in black ink or ochre red began to weaken, and sometimes drawn with a quivering hand. This is described as quivering and wave-line sketch. Actually, it is an indication of the deterioration of brush power and deficiency of aesthetic cultivation.

We must make a special mention of the landscape painting. Originally landscape was painted as the backdrop of divine and human figures. Beginning from the paintings of horizontal landscape in the illustrations in Cave No. 32 3 of Early Tang, the paintings of the "Illusory City" of Cave Nos. 217 and 103, there was an increase of the sense of depth and vastness. During the period of the Five Dynasties, the Map of Mount Wutai in Cave No. 61 further gained an independent status for landscape painting. The Map of Mount Wutai is the largest landscape painting in a thousand years of Dunhuang paintings. It combines reality with imagination. By using the bird's-eye view perspective method the artists have transposed onto the wall thousand miles of landscape of a multitude of mountain peaks and other scenarios of land and water together with the customs and living conditions of the people. Viewed from a distance it is magnificent while on closer examination it has all the vivid details of life. The brush work achieves what is described as "with a few strokes the picture is naturally composed". The composition shows a mastery of management and organization with concentration of objects and activities effortlessly planted amidst their dispersion. The Map created the beginning of the "free-will" style in Chinese landscape painting.

In the illustrations of the sūtras and other stories, the paintings of this period demonstrate a tendency of stereotyping as compared with the early period and Tang period of Dunhuang murals. The increasing use of inscriptions cut apart the painting scenes. The increase in writing adopting the "Bian Wen" style augments the explanatory quality of the murals while diluting the aesthetic scenario, reducing the artistic appeal of the murals.

After the Cao Art Academy, the style and themes of the Mogao art underwent a major change. Although the early murals of Western Xia inherited the scheme of the Cao Family Art Academy they suffered a poverty of themes, catering more to the decorative effect at the cost of depth. Later, the characterization of figures came under the influence of the murals of Gaochang Uighur, creating deity and human figures with both Chinese and Dangxiang national features while continuing the process of sinicization of

Buddhist art.



Flying Figure, Cave No. 3, Yuan Dynasty



Lakshmi, Cave No.3, Yuan Dynasty

The Tantric theme was very prominent in the murals of the Yuan Dynasty and it was particularly due to the influence of the Śākya sect from Tibet. Although only a few caves were cut, they introduced a new style and broke new ground in cave art, changing the lifeless atmosphere of the Mogao Grottoes during the last phase.

In Cave No. 3 (of the Yuan Dynasty), artist Shi Xiaoyu from Ganzhou combined the twisted reed lines with iron-hard lines, gossamer lines and flat-top and thin-end lines and brought about a very high achievement of line drawing in characterization. His canvas looks elegant and less gorgeous which is the typical style of the painting of the heartland China. This contrasts sharply with the Tantric "Secret temple" of Cave No. 465 where there is a heavy dose of thick and bright colours. The latter produces a sense of fear amidst its magnificence of hue which is another realm of its own kind. This is virtually the lone specimen of the art of Śākya Tantric style among the Mogao Grottoes, but even this lone example has inspired great admiration among art lovers.

After this phase, the construction work at Mogao came to a stop. During the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty there was a spur of renovation activities at Dunhuang. These activities resulted in an adulteration of the themes and the production of poor quality art which destroyed the aesthetic appeal of Dunhuang. Thus they should not be listed in accounts of Dunhuang cave construction. The real end in cave art at Dunhuang

came with the relatively few but skilfully painted caves during the Yuan Dynasty.

*Translated by Bagyalakshmi*

[From *Dunhuang shiku yishu lunji*, pp. 224-249]

## Salient Features of Dunhuang Cave Art

Appendix 1



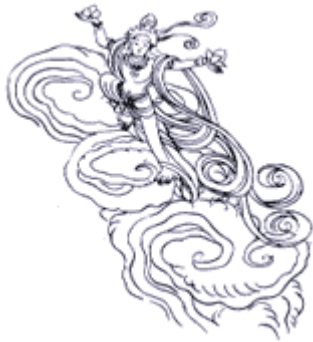
The Dunhuang Grottoes are both a rare national treasure of China as well as a unique cultural heritage of all mankind. They stand out among the art treasures of the world by virtue of their colossal scale, the centuries-long span of history of their creation and preservation, the kaleidoscopic richness and variety of their contents, the consummate skill of the artists, and not the least, the remarkably good condition in which they have been preserved.

Since Dunhuang was at the hub of cultural exchanges between China and the West along the "Silk Road", the caves of Dunhuang possess a special geographical and cultural significance. In the past, the nationalities of Wusun, Yuezhi and Huns had lived in this area. Dunhuang province and the gateway of Yang Guan and Yumen Guan were established in the Han Dynasty: envoys, merchants and monks from China going abroad and their Western counterparts entering China had to pass through these passes. We may, therefore, say that since ancient times, Dunhuang has been the metropolis of "intercourse between China and other nations"--- an area of intercultural synergism. Dunhuang art is inevitably a result of the blend of multitudinous elements and styles, but it remains a part and parcel of the cultural and art system of China.

## Chinese Characteristics of the Cave Architecture

Buddhist cave art originated in India and spread to the Western Regions where it assimilated the local elements and underwent various transformations. The original Indian rock-cut architectural style of the vihāras and caityas assumed new forms, and by the time it reached Dunhuang, it became even more removed from its Indian style. The chan ku (dhyāna-guhā) or meditation caves and the narrow corridors of Dunhuang are different from the Indian pillared hall. Both sides of the corridor are attached to small meditation cells which are an exact replica of the dhyāna-guhā of Subashi in Kuca. The central-column (caitya) caves of the Northern Wei were different from the caves with a pillared hall and a

central stūpa native to India. The former developed from the tunnel caves of Bamiyan in Afghanistan and underwent a transformation at Kizil in the Western Regions. During the latter half of Northern Wei, the central column developed into a multi-storeyed stūpa of Chinese pavilion style. However, the functional aspect of the caitya, i.e., allowing the devotees to circumbulate around the stūpa was still preserved. The back chamber of such caves has a flat chessboard ceiling while the front chamber has an inverted V-shaped ceiling. Chinese style altars are carved out from both the walls below the ends of the inverted V.



Flying figure, Cave No. 25, Yulin Grottoes, Middle Tang

The architecture of early caves at Dunhuang was enriched by the integration of features of Chinese wooden architecture. The ceiling shaped like an inverted dipper was transformed into a decorated canopy from the Sui and Tang dynasties onwards. The central altar has steps leading to it in the front and a rear screen at the back with railings on all sides. On the outer walls of the altar are painted the gates, celestial musicians and animal decorative motifs. On the inner walls of the altar are painted sets of continued screens. The caves show a process of secularization which in turn meant an increase in the assimilation of the palace architectural style, augmenting their Chinese flavour.

### Indian Flying Figures to the Chinese Flying Fairies



Cave No. 248, Northern Wei

All ancient civilizations of the world have their own flying deities. The Greeks have cherubims, their angels with wings. The Chinese "yuren" with feathers growing out of their arms are popularly known as flying fairies. Indians have winged angels as well as flying figures with halos, surrounded by floating clouds. The Dunhuang flying figures originated in India. After entering Kuca they assumed a round face, handsome eyes and a short and stout body. They continued to be represented in the nude in the original Indian style but were shown with a big Persian scarf wound around them and not riding on the clouds. After these figures reached Dunhuang, they merged with the symbolism of Chinese flying fairies, the yuren. By the end of the 5th century, they had been given plump faces, long eyebrows and slit eyes, the hair tied in a top knot and the semi-naked upper torso covered by a big scarf over the shoulders. There were no haloes. These became the flying figures of the Chinese style in Dunhuang.

The Sui emperors were obsessed with flying figures. They constructed mechanical devices in their palaces so that flying figures could raise the curtains, as if recreating scenes from the Buddhist paradise. This was the time when the art of flying figures at Dunhuang reached its zenith. During the Sui Dynasty they appeared in large numbers in a variety of postures and moods. The Sui caves at Dunhuang display an extravaganza that included not the flying figures alone: the musicians in Devapura also take on wings and are shown in circular flight around the caves.

The flying figures of the Tang Dynasty neither had wings nor rode



Bodhisattva, Cave No. 79, High Tang

on the clouds, but they flew gently and danced in a carefree manner in the sky by means of a long scarf exactly as the famous Chinese poet, Li Bai, has described in his poem:

"Lotus in their delicate hands,

Behind the deities and fly high,

Like lightning their colour'd bands

Rising up and floating in the sky."

This was the typical artistic image of Chinese flying fairies.

## Feminization of the Bodhisattvas

Cave art originated from India. In the Indian caves, the proportions of the body, the postures and facial expressions of the figures were all constructed in the realistic manner but the treatment was, at the same time, highly imaginative. The figures showed a strong sex distinction both in their physique and in expression: the male figures had plump faces, moustaches and robust bodies. The female figures had round faces, big eyes, long eyebrows, thick lips, full breasts, slim waists, broad hips and bare feet. The sex organs of male and female figures were also clearly shown. The Kucan figures had inherited this style but did not favour the appearance of naked deities. After entering Gaochang, the Indian Bodhisattvas lost their gender distinctions. The eight categories of supernatural beings present behind the Buddha also lacked distinctions of age and sex. This feature may be observed in the figures of a majority of the early Dunhuang caves. On the one hand, it conformed with the Buddhist preaching that in Buddhakṣetra there is no sex distinction, and on the other hand, it was also in line with the Confucian value system which shunned physiological differences between the sexes and regarded the exhibition of nudity as an affront to tradition and morality. From the Sui Dynasty onwards, the Bodhisattvas underwent a clear process of feminization. The faces of the deities became plump and charming. Greenish moustaches appeared over the lips, the chests were flat and the postures elegant and graceful. Dao Xuan, the eminent monk-scholar of Early Tang, observed: "During the Song and Qi Dynasties (420-502) Bodhisattvas had thick lips, high noses, long eyes, plump cheeks...like strong men. From the Tang Dynasty onwards, the Bodhisattvas began to resemble female celestial musicians painted in soft strokes. Thus, today we compare palace maids with Bodhisattvas." The figures of the Bodhisattvas painted by Zhao Gongyou were colourful, soft and beautiful, with mysterious clothes and beautiful eyes, like those of the court ladies. People lamented that the real purpose behind the painting of Bodhisattvas was lost. Both the Dunhuang and Heartland painters made the images/dunhuang of Bodhisattvas more feminine and worldly in order to "please the viewers". The Dunhuang murals bear witness to this trend.

## Portraits of the Donors in Dunhuang Caves: A Special Class of Portrait Painting in Chinese Art

We have not yet discovered this category of paintings in the Indian Buddhist caves. The caves of Kuca have some portraits of the donors among the murals but they are rarely accompanied by inscriptions. In contrast, in Dunhuang, even in the earlier caves during the latter half of the Sixteen Kingdoms, we see

groups of portraits of donors labelled by inscriptions, lining up the walls. Their presence may be attributed to the Confucian tradition of ancestor-worship. The practice of making portraits of ancestors which had already been in vogue from the Han Dynasty onwards gained a special place for the donors and benefactors in Buddhism here.

Initially, only the individual donors were portrayed. Later, the entire family or a clan became subjects of portraits. From the Western Wei onwards, this trend transformed the Buddhist temples into family temples, reaching a peak during the Tang Dynasty, as may be seen in Cave No. 220 of the sixteenth year of the Zhenguan Era (642), also known as the "Zhai Family Cave". From Zhai Siyuan to his ninth-generation descendant, Zhai Fengda of the Five Dynasties, the cave had built up a visual genealogical tree in the murals for a span of 280 years. Zhai Fengda even had the portraits of his next and third generation painted in the cave, extending the genealogical record to ten-odd generations. This was truly a family temple!

In Cave No. 98 dating from the Five Dynasties, we have another "Cao Yijin Cave", where there are altogether 169 portraits of the donors. They include portraits of the Zhang and Suo families who were related to the Cao family. Cao's son-in-law, the Khotan King Li Shengtian, officers of the military command as well as Cao family's relations, Uighur Princesses, Cao Yijing and his immediate descendants for three generations including daughters and sons-in-law, all are arranged according to seniority. There is also a group of huge life-size and larger-than-life portraits, even more prominently displayed than Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Moreover, their portraits have made a circle around the cave in great style as if they were there not to pay homage to Buddha, but to parade themselves and to be worshipped by their admirers --- almost setting up a cult of the Cao family. This is a classic instance of the reflection of China's feudal society and patriarchal order in the Buddhist cave art milieu.

## Illustrations of the Universe of Mahāyāna Sūtras

Mahāyāna Buddhism prospered in China and developed into many sects. All the major texts such as the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, the Avatamsaka Sūtra, the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, the Amitābha Sūtra, the Maitreya Sūtra, etc. have been represented through detailed illustrations at Dunhuang. Usually, an entire painting is composed around a single sūtra. Similarly, a Jātaka also makes a whole painting, which can also be passed off as a sūtra illustration. However, a huge sūtra illustration is a collection of many stories. We do not come across any such illustration among the Buddhist monuments in any Buddhist country before the second half of the sixth century, nor do we have any examples in Central Asia. This is the exclusive creation of Chinese painting masters in order to propagate the teachings of the Buddhist scriptures.

The information we have at present based on the known ancient paintings shows that as early as the latter half of the Northern Wei huge illustrations of Sukhāvātī and Vimalakīrti had already appeared in Chinese style. In general, Dunhuang was a step behind the style prevailing in "heartland" China. The illustration of sūtra began in the "heartland" from the Sui Dynasty onwards and reached a climax by the Tang. In all, there are 1,102 large depictions of twenty-odd sūtras in various Tang caves. Prominent among them are the illustrations of Sukhāvātī, Bhaiṣajyaguru, Maitreya, Vimalakīrti, as also from the Sūtra of *Bao'en jing* (Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness) and *Miyan jing* (Ghanavyūha Sūtra). If we add to these the illustrations of the Jātaka stories, the number will go up to approximately 1,350. This entitles Dunhuang Grottoes to proclaim itself as the greatest kingdom of illustrations of Mahāyāna Sūtras in the world today. Particularly from the Tibetan periods onwards, depictions of various Buddhist



sects were put together in a single cave, vying with one another in magnificence and style.



The sūtra illustrations are the concrete manifestations of abstract tenets. In the process of concretization, scenes of magnificent palace buildings, pavilions and gardens are transposed to the paintings. In these sūtra illustrations we see an aesthetic universe further divided by religious, political and ethical realms. We have here special Chinese features of the synthesis of the three schools of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

Vimalakirti Sutra, Cave No. 159, Middle Tang

### **Dunhuang Murals: A Treasury of Music and Dance**

Music and dance make up the totality of the Dunhuang murals which project art as an entity composed of multiple elements. We have three major categories of music:

1. Heartland Chinese music as accompaniment for song and dance, such as "Qingshang" music and "Yan" music;
2. Music for song and dance from the Western Regions, such as Kucan music and Shule (Kashghar) music; and
3. Foreign music for song and dance such as "Tianzhu" (Indian) music.

The most popular music for song and dance in the Hexi Corridor was the "Western Liang Tune" (*xiliangyue*) which was a synthesis of the tune from Kuca with that of "heartland" China. With the prosperity of the "Silk Road" and development of Buddhist art in Dunhuang, Indian music left a deep impact on the tunes prevalent at Dunhuang.



The music for song and dance in Dunhuang murals can further be divided into two categories: the celestial and the secular tune. The so-called celestial music comprises the tunes created during the appearance of the deities in the world of Buddhakṣetra. We see the tune when the celestial musician is represented all over the Dunhuang caves of the early period. We also see it in the giant canvases of magnificent life of the Sukhāvātī created in their grandeur during the Tang Dynasty, such as the scenes of "Huxuan" (foreign) dance painted in Cave No. 220 and "zhezhi" (lotus) dance in Cave No. 217. The secular music includes the music played in the song and dance of real life. In "the Painting of Zhang Yichao on his journey" we see the music played by his singers and dancers. We also see it in the musical band (*qingshangji*) and acrobatic show in another painting depicting his wife, the "Lady of Song". We see it again in the dance scene in the painting called "Marriage" when the lute is being played to the liuyao tune. The Devas participating in the celestial music and the mudrās and postures of Bodhisattvas are those who convey the music of Indian dances. But all the musical tunes were internalized by the artists of the Tang Dynasty and were absorbed into the gigantic system of Chinese music and dance in the spirit of continuous synthesis, characteristic of China's national ethos.

Musicians and dancers, Cave No. 220, Early Tang

### **Dunhuang Cave Art and Theology**

The cave art of Dunhuang derived from the style and technique of Buddhist art of the Western Regions. Its main purpose was to exalt the noble examples of the life of Buddha and stories about his previous lives in accumulating philanthropic virtues. Thus, we have a vigorous propagation of tragic themes such as Prince Sattva feeding himself to the tigress, King Śibi cutting off his flesh to feed the eagle, King Chandraprabha offering his head to a Brahmin a thousand times, Sushānti feeding his parents with his own flesh. Through this propagation of the spirit of self-sacrifice, the ultimate idealism of becoming a Buddha is kept alive.



During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, there were periods of national unification and great progress in political economy which gave rise to the sudden rage for the illustrations of Mahāyāna Sūtras.

The depictions of the paradise scenes of Maitreya, of Bhaiṣajyaguru, and of Amitābha and also of the episodes from the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra and the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra replaced the dominant tragic mood of the earlier scenes of sadness and tragedy with scenes of peace and prosperity: represented by high-rise buildings and pavilions and magnificent singing and dancing. Beliefs that one can attain Buddhahood immediately after death or reach Sukhāvātī by chanting the scriptures for only seven days have replaced the earlier idea of becoming the enlightened one only after an endlessly long course of asceticism. The following set of beliefs are now held by the devotees:

Musicians and dancers, Cave No. 220, Early Tang

1. *Blessings for the deceased*: Hoping the souls of one's late parents and ancestors be liberated from Hell and reborn in Sukhāvātī.
2. *Blessings for the living*: Some manuscripts of Dunhuang paintings read: "Wishing that my family members hold good positions and have a peaceful life"; "Wishing that my old mother and all her descendants be delivered from sufferings"; and "Wishing that my master, the Duke of Cao, be safe and sound" and so on.
3. *Attaining Buddhahood (a general wish)*: Some manuscripts have the following prayers: "Praying that all the dead souls take birth in Sukhāvātī"; "Wishing that all the beings of this world attain enlightenment" and "Wishing all beings to become Buddha at once". Among all the instances, the strongest desire is to have blessings for the living. For example, in the illustrations of chapter on Samantamukha in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra and Avalokiteśvara Sūtra as well as Sahasrabhuja-Sahasranetra Avalokiteśvara, there are numerous scenes which show that if the suffering beings chant the name of Avalokiteśvara, they will be delivered from their suffering instead of attaining Buddhahood after death. Thus, the aim of the paintings depicting Sukhāvātī is to obtain deliverance from the sufferings of this world and to go to Sukhāvātī to attain Buddhahood through the worship of Buddha. But this is easier said than done because of the nine hierarchical qualifications which pursue one's life even up to the paradise. Buddhist theology has undergone a thousand years of transformation in China through the influence of the Confucian ethics rooted firmly in this life and in this world.

## The Exchange of Mural Composition Techniques between China and India

The Dunhuang murals derive their technique from two sources: one is the traditional Chinese mural technique, based on the experience of tomb murals of the Han and Jin Dynasties; the other is the one which came from India via the Western Regions. Both these sources have their distinct national features, reflected in characterization, line drawing, composition, colouring and capturing of the mood. In this

paper, I shall focus only on the two entirely different methods of three-dimensional effect used in the cave murals.

"Aotufa" or the Indian technique that has travelled to China from the Western Regions aims at creating a three-dimensional effect by varying the pigments to effect light and shade. This method which has spread from Ajanta had already undergone many modifications before reaching Dunhuang. What the Dunhuang artists have learnt is the usage of reddish-pink colour for painting the body, vermilion-red for the eye-sockets, nose, wings and the contours of face in order to highlight light and shade, and finally using white for the bridge of the nose and the eye- ball because these parts are the brightest. With the passage of time, the pigments have changed colour. The muscles have taken on a greyish-black colour; this is particularly true with the white bridge of the nose, resulting in the appearance of the Chinese character in the face. This colouring technique prevailed in the Dunhuang caves for more than 250 years.

The traditional Chinese colouring technique is a simple one in contrast to the Indian three-dimensional method. Only a red patch is painted on the cheeks and on the upper eyelids which nevertheless imparts a three-dimensional effect. This technique was introduced from the Warring States period and came to maturity during Western Han. It entered Dunhuang by the end of the fifth century where it co-existed for nearly a hundred years with the light-and-shade technique of the Western Regions. At the end of the sixth century during the Sui Dynasty, the western and Chinese colouring techniques fused into one, which relied mainly on colouring variations combined with light and shade touches. In the beginning of the seventh century (Tang Dynasty), a brand-new Chinese three-dimensional technique was evolved.

### **The Fusion of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism**

In the early phases of Dunhuang art, the thrust was on the illustration of Buddha's sermons, Buddha's life-story, the Jātaka tales which focus on Buddha's previous lives in self-sacrifice to rescue others, and also those Buddhist stories which expound the working of Karma. In addition, there were a thousand meditating Buddhas. This range of contents exalted the attainment of Enlightenment through the practices of the six *pāramitās* (commandments) and the achievement of a sombre and tranquil mood.

During the late Northern Wei, there appeared in Dunhuang the sacred figures of Taoism, such as the god Dongwanggong, goddess Xiwangmu, Fuxi, Nūwa, the Necromancer, the four guardian angels (the Red Bird, Xuanwu, Green Dragons and White Tigers) and the winged angels, in addition to the warrior Wuhuo. Scenes of floating and swirling clouds and celestial flowers also appeared to create a dynamic scenario. Bodhisattvas with "elegant bones and handsome faces" painted in the style of South China are seen wearing a long gown and shoes with high heels and raised front. These were the images/dunhuang of Chinese elite. We have in these paintings a reflection of Buddhism internalizing Taoist mythology after it had settled in China.

From the Sui and Tang dynasties onwards there appeared many fake sūtras authored by the Chinese. *Bao fumu enzhong jing* (sūtras for Redemption from Indebtedness) was an adopted version of *Xiaoijing* (Canon of Filial Piety) produced by Chinese writers. Some caves of the Tang Dynasty contain illustrations of this sūtra. The central portion is given to Buddha while the surrounding walls feature the ten months' cycle of a child during pregnancy, the different stages of rearing the child into a grown-up, the son's disobedience to his father and other kinds of misbehaviour against his parents. This is not a propagation of Buddhism but an exaltation of Confucian filial piety. At the heart of several illustrations of "Sukhāvati" we discover the political and ethical realms of Confucianism. A scholar of the Southern and Northern Dynasties has aptly said, "If Buddha had been born in China, he would have been Confucius and if Confucius had been born in the West he would have been Buddha."

## **Dunhuang: The Confluence of Chinese and Foreign Styles of Cave Art**

In the middle of the third century B.C., King Aśoka patronized Buddhism in a big way. Buddhist art developed in India in the first century. The Hellenistic style of Buddhist art appeared in Gandhāra and subsequently spread to other countries. Around the second century, it entered Khotan from Afghanistan. In the Minfeng tomb of Han style, south of Tianshan Range in Xinjiang, we discover the Hellenistic style of Bodhisattva images/dunhuang and the Chinese dragon design. In the temple ruins of Nuoqiang we discover the painting of Sudānā Jātaka. At the same time, to the north of Tianshan Range, centring around Kuca, we come across the art style of Bamiyan from the Kizil caves which merged with Kucan customs and folklore to create the typical Kucan story paintings.

However, Kucan art still carried within it elements of Indian, Afghan and Persian influence. More important is the contribution of Chinese painting. Hence a multi-faceted style of Western Regions came into existence.

Since the Jin Dynasty, Gaochang has always been governed by a Chinese regime, and Chinese culture has been deep-rooted. The nude paintings which came from the west were resisted by Confucian ideology. The sex of the Bodhisattvas was underplayed. Buddha and other deities became sexless celestial beings. The painting style here was closely associated with the "heartland" Chinese style. Gaochang was thus really the starting station of intercultural synergism in art between China and the West.

After the spread of Buddhist art to Dunhuang, more elements of Chinese culture were internalized from the very inception. We see examples of this in the gate-shaped altar, the inverted V-shaped ceiling, group painting in serials, and in the free and bold stroke work. However, the western style was still being preserved. During Northern Wei, the sinicization of figures and development of comic-strip compositions were in evidence. Although the Indian and Persian elements are still visible in the style, due to the westward expansion of Buddhist art of "heartland" China, especially that of South China (under the regimes of the Southern Dynasties), the heartland style became prominent in theme, characterization, line drawing, colouring and in its stereoscopic effect. This development took the process of sinicization in Dunhuang cave art to a high tide. At the same time, the Western style and the Heartland style interacted and also co-existed at Dunhuang, creating a new situation. After the Taihe Era (828-835), the "heartland" painting style spread to Western Regions, Central Asia and India along with the travels of Chinese monks such as Songyun, Huisheng and others to India. The Dunhuang Grottoes were undoubtedly the melting pot of the culture and art of China and the Western styles.

*Translated by Sonu Agnihotri*

This was a paper presented by Prof. Duan Wenjie at the international seminar on "Cave Art of India and China",

held in New Delhi, on November 25-27, 1991. --- Editor

## Conservation and Copying of Cultural Relics at Dunhuang

### Appendix 2

The Cultural Relics of Dunhuang Caves are the national treasure of China, and are also a part of the cultural heritage of all mankind. The UNESCO has already issued the certificate of world cultural heritage to the Dunhuang Academy, thus declaring the Dunhuang Grottoes as specially protected monuments.

The Dunhuang Grottoes came under State protection and administration in 1943. Although the Dunhuang Research Institute had already been established, owing to a shortage of human and monetary resources, it could not perform the duty of protecting the caves from rampant plundering by foreign antique thieves. Real conservation work of the caves began only after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.



Sibi Jataka, Cave No. 254, Northern Wei (Copied by Duan Wenjie)

In 1950, the Ministry of Culture took over the monuments and renamed the Institute as Dunhuang Research Institute of Cultural Relics. It came directly under the jurisdiction of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the Ministry of Culture in the Central Government.

In 1951, the Bureau of Cultural Relics sent an inspection team to Dunhuang, and allocated special funds to repair the wooden caves dating from the Tang and Song dynasties. In 1956, the Bureau sent another inspection team to strengthen the early caves. In 1962, Premier Zhou Enlai allocated a sum of 1,000,000 *yuan* (approximately one million rupees) to give a facelift to the entire complex of grottoes in accordance with the suggestion of Liang Sicheng, an expert on ancient Chinese architecture, who said that the Grottoes should be "something in the appearance of nothing, reality in the appearance of illusion, sagacity in the appearance of ignorance." The Grottoes were ultimately saved from the threat of collapse that seemed imminent prior to these measures. Today, we have an entirely new look with neatly gravelled conglomerate surfaces and convenient passages leading to all the caves, thanks to Premier Zhou Enlai's mobilizing the required resources at a time when the country was still facing a financial crunch. During the turmoil of the Great Cultural Revolution, Premier Zhou gave instructions that the safety of the monuments should be ensured at all costs. We, at the Academy, issued circulars and explained to Red Guards about the historic and artistic value of the monuments. Although the turmoil lasted for ten long years the Mogao Grottoes have remained unscathed. We who have worked for a long time in the Grottoes have always felt

grateful to Premier Zhou and cherish fond memories of him.

For the past twelve years the Government of China has been pursuing a policy of Open Door and Reform. Consequently, the conservation work at Dunhuang has been developing with vigour with various conservation methods being carried on simultaneously. The first of these entailed the recruitment of people for conservation purposes. At present there are thirty security guards on a twenty-four hour patrol guarding against vandalism and theft. Secondly, there is legal protection: inside the complex of the Academy a police station has been set up to enforce the laws for the protection of the historical monuments and ensure the tranquillity of the protected area. We have installed modern gadgets for conservation with a monitoring system to keep a watch on the activities of intruders.

Scientific measures are a very important aspect of conservation work. It is directly connected with the safety of the mural and the stucco statues. We have restored more than 2,000 square metres of murals which were about to peel off and repaired 40 to 50 damaged stucco statues. In recent years we have shifted our focus from conservation to scientific research. Alongside our own efforts we have established collaborative links with other scientific research institutions in the country. At the same time international organisations have offered cooperation. Together with the Paul Getty Foundation (U.S.A.) and the Research Institute on Cultural Treasures (Japan), we have a scientific conservation programme combating desertification and focussing on meteorological observation, atmosphere analysis, temperature and moisture testing, research in discoloration, disease of historical monuments, etc. We have obtained encouraging results from these activities. Our own scientific research team has gained much expertise in the course of such cooperation and external help has played a positive role in scientific research and conservation.

### **Specific Measures for Viewing the Grottoes**

The Mogao Grottoes are a state-level enterprise to open up to foreign countries. There are strict rules about its management. The murals in the caves have been fitted with protective glass screens and doors and windows made of an aluminium alloy with specially appointed key-keepers. An account of visitors entering and leaving the caves is maintained for the safety of the monuments. The caves are opened in rotation in a restrictive manner. Only ten caves are opened to the general tourists along with general introduction of the main features by guides. For the foreign guests, we open 30 caves representing all periods, they are provided with guides who explain in foreign languages. For Chinese and foreign experts we open fifty or even more caves. The caves were open to many hazards in the course of more than a millennium of exposure to sandy wind and sunlight, and corrosion by carbon dioxide, leaving the murals in an extremely fragile condition. Hence, we have to restrict the number of visitors inside a cave, and the duration of their stay inside as well as the gadgets taken by them to ensure the protection of these historical relics of universal value.

### **Reproduction**

Copying the paintings means reproduction for the custodians of the monuments. After copying not only can the paintings be preserved, but these reproductions can be exhibited so as to introduce them to both national and international viewers.

The Academy has been engaged in this important task for over fifty years now. Through the assiduous labour of 50 to 60 artists we have accumulated a wealth of reproductions. More than 30 exhibitions have been held both inside and outside the country. During the exhibitions in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Burma, Japan and France, seminars were convened simultaneously. During the 1950s two such exhibitions had been held in India which have played a positive role in promoting cultural exchanges between China and

India.

Copying work has often been looked down upon. But copying is also learning. During the process of copying, one has to give inputs of research, grasp the laws and rhythms of the painting in question and perfect the technique. Only then can the reproduction capture the spirit of the original. Therefore the copiers should have a rich knowledge of the tradition as well as profound expertise and skill; otherwise the reproduction will not transpose both the visual and spiritual excellence of the originals. A good number of our reproductions are the crystallization of collective wisdom and outcome of research.

As professional copiers, we have evolved a standard copying procedure. The first step is to sketch. Three methods of sketching can be employed: one is to directly sketch out the contours in front of the wall by reducing the size of the figures. We did not adopt this method at Dunhuang. The second method is to use tracing paper and sketch out the mural from the wall. While this ensures an accurate sketch it will damage the monument and that we consider quite unacceptable. The third method is by using the slide projector. A slide of the mural is first taken and the sketching is done by projecting the slide on the wall to be traced out on a paper. The painter then makes corrections on the sketch by checking it with the mural on the wall. After the correction, the painter then draws out the contours with thick black ink in the cave to get the essence of the wall painting. Then, the contours are transferred in colour on to the painting paper in colour according to the details of the mural. This marks the end of the first step in the process.

The second step is to apply colour. The paper with coloured contours is mounted on the drawing board and colours are applied in front of the original mural. First, apply the basic colour, then the background colours which are vital to the tonal quality and decorative beauty of the copy. We know that after colouring, the ancient painters labelled signs on the mural sketch, such as "x" (for red), "y" (for green) and "z" (for blue) and so on. According to the aesthetic rules of symmetry, harmony, contrast, unity in diversity, the artists applied the colour following the signs in a streamlined manner.



The Great Miracle of Sravasti, Cave No. 263, Northern Wei (Copied by Dong Xiwen)

Most of the murals in the early periods used the free method (*tuse*): colouring with spontaneity with vigour and vividness. From the Tang Dynasty onwards, most of the murals used the contour-controlled method (*tianse*): filling colours into the contours which acted as a constraint to the free flow of the colour. The style was rigid but very decorative. The copiers have to grasp such characteristics and copy them faithfully.

The third step provides the finishing touch. In the process of mural creation, the contours were often covered by colouring. The early murals, in particular, were done without elaborate sketching and hence



could not produce wholesome images/dunhuang. Colouring also underwent repeated transformations. Thus, the painter had to emphasise on the finishing line drawing to give stability to the image. Such a finishing line is also a challenge for the skill of the copier.

There are three techniques of copying. The first is objective copying, i.e., reproducing the murals according to their present condition without any alteration to the faded or damaged spots. As custodians of historical relics, this is the method we mainly adopt. Since the copies are the reproductions of ancient art the greater the resemblance to the original the higher its value for purpose of preservation. Many reproductions bear the aim of attaining this ideal standard, i.e., to confuse the viewer as to whether they are reproductions or the originals.

The second technique involves the use of a whole set of old colours to reproduce the originals. For instance, when we copy the historical ships and vehicles, dance and music, costumes and decorations, we repair on our canvas the damaged portion of the mural by the application of old and faded colours to leave no trace of the repair. We do this after proper research and the reproduction is to facilitate historical research work.

The third technique is restoration copying, i.e. by the process of copying we try to restore the magnificent looks of the murals as if they were freshly painted. Artist Zhang Daqian has adopted this technique to copy the Dunhuang murals. An artist is permitted to reveal the original looks of the murals only if such a restoration is based on research with reliable scientific basis. This technique deserves to be tried out, but it is improper to use such reproductions as propaganda materials for introducing the relics to the wider public. If we can exhibit an objective reproduction and a copy according to the restoration technique of the same mural, side by side, it will create an interest among the viewers in comparative studies, and serve the greater purpose of the exhibition. But because of the complicated colour changes, without an enormous scientific data and a continuous process of artistic trial and error it is very difficult to restore with any degree of precision the original appearance of the mural. We have tried this technique only selectively in a few cases.

The copying process is also a process of research. Five hurdles have to be crossed in order to acquire copying expertise through investigation, comparison, analysis and research.

### **1. Image Making**

We have to grasp the characteristics of the images/dunhuang including the facial appearance, body proportion, postures, dress, etc. which are to be copied. As in Cave No. 275 of Northern Liang, the Bodhisattva's face is egg shaped, with standing eyebrows and slanting eyes, a long nose rising almost from the forehead, thick lips, wide mouth and rounded brushwork of colouring. The nose, bejewelled crown, dhoti, etc. betray a direct influence from the Kucan murals. But there are dissimilarities in style in different caves of the same period. Hence, not only must we grasp the characteristics of a particular period but also understand the differences in the image-making in various caves of the same period. Only then, can one achieve objectivity and precision.

### **2. Composition**

We have to grasp the layout, i.e., the sense of space and artistic conception of the mural that we wish to copy. The crux of the matter lies in the perspective. One must understand the method of perspective of Chinese tradition, i.e., "a large viewer looking at a small scene", like a person looking at a rockery, standing on top looking at the view below. This is the "bird's-eye view" style with a "radiant perspective", thus creating boundless space in the limited space of the mural and a magnificent paradise --- an effect

which cannot be obtained by the focus perspective method of Western art.

### **3. Line Drawing**

In painting, lines constitute the main language in China's image-making with a long history of more than 5000 years. The art of Dunhuang has inherited this excellent tradition. Lines include draft lines, final lines, decorative lines and others devised according to their respective functions which include the brush lines, iron-hard lines, orchid-leaf lines, twisted-reed lines, free-thread lines of the gossamer style, broad-top and thin-end lines and so on according to their shapes and brush movements. Different lines perform different duties. The images/dunhuang are variedly created by different lines during different periods. In the murals of the early periods the artists made draft sketches with ochre-red in fine brush lines, but finalised the contours with iron-hard lines, while resorting to iron-hard line with white powder to highlight the mood of the figures. During the Tang Dynasty, drafting was done with orchid-leaf lines in light black ink and the contours finalised with orchid-leaf lines printed with thick black ink. The copier is required to grasp the peculiar features of a period in line drawing in general and in the employment of lines in the characterization in every image. Meanwhile, the thickness of the black ink, the beginning, ending, turning and the stopping of the brush on the part of mural painters as well as the experience and skill of the copier are the essential ingredients for good reproduction.

### **4. Colouring**

This is an important stage in the copying process. The basic principle of impressionist painting is to apply colouring according to the objects. Sometimes, the method of symbolic colouring to highlight different objects is also resorted to create a deep supernatural mood, such as using mineral green to colour the horses and vermilion to colour men. There were two traditional Chinese methods of colouring. Most of the painters of early period applied colour in the free method exhibiting a forceful brush work, creating spontaneity and vividness. From the Tang Dynasty onwards, most of the paintings used the contour-control method in colouring, neatly creating an impression of rigidity and regularity and a strong decorative quality. There were also the "over- colouring" method (*chense*) and "colour-blowing" method (*chuisse*). The most important was the three-dimensional method (*ksaya-vridhhi*) which had been introduced to China from India. The three-dimensional method with the effect of light and shade is known in Chinese history as "Tianzhu yifa" (traditional method of Heavenly India). Meanwhile, we have another traditional Chinese three-dimensional method which contrasts the Indian light-and-shade method, i.e., using red colour for the bright side, and leaving the shaded parts colourless. Not until the Sui Dynasty was there a synthesis of the Chinese and Indian styles and a new three-dimensional method of colouring in the making.

### **5. Delineating the Mood**

This is the facial expression, with eyes playing the crucial role. More than 2000 years ago Mencius had said, "The eye is the window of the mind." The Dunhuang murals have made full use of the five organs particularly the eyes, showing the changing moods of happiness, anger. Grasping the spirit in representations of the mouth, eyebrows and specially the eyes is the highest achievement of reproduction. But this is not merely a point of technique. Even more important is the aesthetic accomplishment of the copier himself.



Cave No. 112, Mid Tang

The Dunhuang Academy believed that copying murals is a solemn task for the art world. Among other activities, the Academy disseminates the art of Dunhuang through exhibitions, seminars and publications, preserves the culture of China and promotes international cultural exchanges. These form a part of the construction of the spiritual civilization of Socialism. We, who have been copying the murals of Dunhuang all our lives, cherish a sense of pride and honour.

*Translated by Bagyalakshmi*

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## Periodization of the Mogao Caves

1. **The period of Sixteen Kingdoms** (366-439): Seven Caves [Nos. 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 275].
2. **The Northern Wei period** (439-534): Eight Caves [Nos. 251, 254, 257, 259, 260, 263, 265, 487].
3. **Western Wei period** (535-556): Ten Caves [Nos. 246, 247, 248, 249, 285, 286, 288, 431, 435, 437].
4. **The Northern Zhou period** (557-580): Fifteen Caves [Nos. 250, 290, 294, 296, 297, 298, 299, 301, 428, 430, 438, 439, 440, 442, 461].
5. **Sui Dynasty** (581-618): Seventy Caves [Nos. 56, 59, 62, 63, 64, 206, 253, 255, 262, 266, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 284, 292, 293, 295, 302, 303, 304, 305, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 388, 389, 393, 394, 396, 397, 398, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 430, 433, 434, 436, 451, 453, 455, 485].
6. **Early Tang** (the first years of the Tang Dynasty, 618-704): Forty-four Caves [Nos. 57, 60, 68, 71, 77, 96, 202, 203, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 220, 242, 244, 280, 283, 287, 321, 322, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 371, 372, 373, 375, 381, 386, 390, 392, 448].
7. **High Tang** (the period which witnessed the high tide of the Tang imperial power, 705-780): Eighty Caves [Nos. 23, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 66, 74, 75, 79, 80, 91, 101, 103, 109, 113, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 148, 162, 164, 165, 166, 170, 171, 172, 175, 176, 180, 182, 185, 194, 199, 208, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 225, 264, 319, 320, 323, 374, 384, 387, 444, 445, 446, 458, 460, 482, 484, 490].
8. **Middle Tang** (the phase of decline of the Tang power, 781-847) also known as the Tubo (Tibetan) period: Forty-four Caves [Nos. 21, 92, 93, 112, 133, 134, 135, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159, 179, 186, 188, 191, 197, 200, 201, 202, 222, 231, 236, 237, 238, 240, 258, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 365, 369, 370, 447, 469, 471, 472, 474, 475, 478, 479].
9. **Late Tang** (the last phase of the Tang Dynasty, 848-906, during which Dunhuang returned to Chinese rule because of the military feat of a local general Zhang Yichao): Sixty Caves [Nos. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 54, 82, 85, 94, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111, 114, 127, 128, 132, 138, 139, 141, 144, 145, 147, 150, 156, 160, 161, 163, 167, 168, 173, 177, 181, 183, 184, 190, 192, 193, 195, 196, 198, 221, 227, 232, 241, 336, 337, 343, 459, 470, 473].
10. **Five Dynasties** (907-923): Thirty-two Caves [Nos. 4, 5, 6, 22, 36, 40, 53, 61, 72, 78, 86, 90, 98, 99, 100, 108, 137, 146, 187, 226, 261, 300, 342, 346, 362, 385, 391, 440, 441, 468, 469, 476].
11. **Song Dynasty** (only the early part, 960-1035): Forty-three Caves [Nos. 7, 15, 25, 34, 35, 55, 58, 65, 67, 73, 76, 89, 94, 118, 130, 136, 152, 170, 174, 178, 189, 230, 235, 243, 256, 264, 289, 355, 364, 368, 376, 377, 427, 431, 443, 444, 449, 452, 454, 456, 457, 467, 478].
12. **Western Xia** (1036-1226): Eighty-two Caves [Nos. 6, 16, 27, 29, 30, 37, 38, 69, 70, 78, 81, 83, 84, 87, 88, 97, 140, 142, 151, 164, 165, 169, 206, 207, 223, 224, 229, 233, 234, 239, 245, 246, 252, 263, 265, 281, 291, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 330, 339, 344, 345, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 356, 363,

365, 366, 367, 378, 382, 388, 389, 395, 399, 400, 408, 409, 415, 418, 420, 432, 437, 450, 460, 464, 491].

13. **Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty** (1227-1368): Ten Caves [Nos. 1, 2, 3, 95, 149, 462, 463, 464, 465, 477].

## A Glimpse of the Mogao Caves

### Cave No. 1

**Period of Construction:** Yuan (renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** A set of four statues cast in Qing is sheltered in the niche on the west wall. Traces of the Buddha throne are extant on the south wall.

### Cave No. 2

**Period of Construction:** Yuan (renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** There are nineteen statues on the horse-hoof shaped Buddha altar along the north, south and west walls. The south wall has miniature Buddha paintings drawn during Yuan at the lower level.

### Cave No. 3

**Period of Construction:** Yuan (the stucco statues being redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling displays four sculpted dragons in the centre. The niche on the west wall houses a statue sculpted in Qing. The south wall portrays an eleven-headed thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. On the east is Indra. The north wall features similar paintings as the south wall. Above the entrance on the east wall are five cross-legged sitting Buddhas. To the south of the entrance is the portrait of Avalokiteśvara holding the nectar flask and to the north is the Avalokiteśvara who distributes wealth among the people.

### Cave No. 4

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the stucco statues being redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** On the central altar are seventeen statues carved in Qing. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Amitābha-Sūtra, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. Below them is a painting of three female donors (facing east) and six male donors (facing west). There is a seven-panel screen on which Buddha stories are painted. Drawn below the screen is a narrow doorway inside which are shown flaming pearls and flowers. Above the entrance on the east wall is an illustration of the Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra; a male and four female donors with one attendant are drawn below.

### Cave No. 5

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the stucco statues being redecorated in Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The ceiling shows illustrations of sūtras, which are blurred, and six and eight auspicious signs remain on the northern and southern slopes respectively.

**Main Hall:** Miniature Buddhas are on the north, south and west slopes of the ceiling. Sheltered in the niche on the west wall are nine statues cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. On the south wall from west to east are the illustrations of the Maitreya-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness; below them are twelve male donors. On the north wall from west to east are the illustrations of Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra and three paintings of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, and below them are two female donors. To the south and north of the entrance of the east wall are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra, the south side has Mañjuśrī with four male donors below him; the north side has Vimalakīrti, but faded at the bottom.

#### Cave No. 6

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Three preaching scenes are extant on the ceiling with the west and south walls featuring the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa.

**Corridor:** An Avalokiteśvara painted on the ceiling along with Kṣitigarbha and ten lieutenants; seven Buddhas on both north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows parrots and coiled dragons, circular lines, decorative hangings and floral motifs; all four slopes feature the preaching scene of the Trinity of Buddha. On the ceiling of the niche on the west wall the chess-board patterns and cluster of flowers are the principal designs. The east and west slopes have five cross-legged sitting Buddhas, two Aupapādakas; the south slope has three cross-legged sitting Buddhas, one Aupapādaka and a lotus while the north slope shows three cross-legged sitting Buddhas and two Aupapādakas. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of Amitābha-Sūtra and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, and below it a painting of nine bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia. On the north wall from west to east are an illustration each of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Avatamsaka-Sūtra, below it a painting of nine bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia. Adorning the east wall is an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. Above the entrance is a depiction of Buddhhaloka; to the north and south of the entrance are the portraits of Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively; below it a painting of five bodhisattvas drawn during Western Xia.

#### Cave No. 7

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (the paintings redrawn during Song and the cave renovated during Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** On the ceiling miniature Buddhas are drawn on lotus, with thirteen Buddhas on the southern slope and eleven on the northern. Portraits of the Cao family patrons are drawn on the south and north walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is decorated with lotus designs in the centre, on the four slopes are camellia, chestnut lines and decorative hangings encircled by sixteen heavenly musicians. A Śākyamuni preaches in the centre on the western slope, below it are ponds, kalaviṅkas and, on either side, various Buddhas attending the sermon in five groups. Miniature Buddhas are painted on the south, east and north slopes and a preaching scene occupies the central place on each of these slopes. The niche on the west wall houses a set of five statues cast in Qing. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra (the east side portrays the nine inauspicious deaths) and the

Maitreya-Sūtra. A painting of twelve male donors and two bhikṣus is seen below. On the north wall from west to east are illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra (the east side portrays the sixteen meditations) and the Devatā-Sūtra; below it a painting of thirteen female donors and one bhikṣunī. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of a cross-legged Buddha drawn in Yuan, on either side of the entrance is an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra, to the north is Mañjuśrī and to the south is Vimalakīrti, seven alms-offering bhikṣus are seen below.

### Cave No. 8

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling features art designs, on the west wall two male devotees and one bhikṣu are painted.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is damaged, but fragments of a preaching scene are visible in the corner of the west and south slopes. The south slope depicts Avalokiteśvara rescuing people from calamities. A pattern remains on the north wall niche's lintel; the west wall has an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with the sixteen meditations on the south side; on the north side Ajātaśatru is seen along with sixteen meditations. An illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and the twelve great vows are shown on the east wall. The south wall shows a painting of Śākyamuni preaching the dharma and a host of kings in attendance; the western section shows Sūrya attending the sermon, to the east of the entrance are the figures of two male donors while to the west are two bhikṣus attending the deities.

### Cave No. 9

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Yuan, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling exhibits three portraits of Avalokiteśvara (a large portion has been damaged). The south end shows the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. Above the door of the west wall is a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. The south wall is Cave No. 10. The north wall is Cave No. 8 all inside this cave.

**Corridor:** On the ceiling are paintings of Buddhist historical stories such as the stone statue floating on the river, and Vaiśravaṇa and Sāriputra drying the sea. On the south and north walls are the portraits of important imperial officers stationing in northwest China during Late Tang.

**Main Hall:** The canopy shaped niche of the central column shelters nine images carved in Qing, a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne, twelve bottle shaped doors on each of which are drawn seven gems and a precious pearl. The walls of the niche are painted with the images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and other figures. The west wall illustrates the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra. The top portion of the wall is decorated with floral motifs forming a border design. The south wall illustrates the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa decorated with border designs similar to those on the west wall. The illustration on the north wall is that of Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra decorated with border designs on the west and south walls. A painting of four male donors is seen above the entrance of the east wall, to the south and north of the entrance are illustrations of the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and Mañjuśrī -Sūtra respectively.

### Cave No. 10



**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On either side of the entrance on the western wall are six bhikṣus (out of which two have faded).

**Main Hall:** Three statues carved during Qing can be seen in the main hall. The central theme of the caisson ceiling is the eleven-headed and twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 11**

**Period of Construction:** Qing Dynasty.

**Contents:** The north wall has a set of three statues chiselled during Qing and a painting of a screen with clouds and dragons drawn in Qing.

#### **Cave No. 12**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (repainted during the Five Dynasties, the stucco statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Two sets of miniature Buddhas, one set of which in six rows painted during Late Tang and the other in two rows painted during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows a lion and a lotus in the centre; circular lines, chestnut lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings can be seen on the four slopes; hovering on the four sides are sixteen heavenly musicians. There are miniature Buddhas drawn on the four slopes with a preaching scene at the centre. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha and two disciples, four bodhisattvas and two devarājas repaired in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. From west to east on the south wall are illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra; painted below these is the eleven-panel screen showing the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara on four panels, Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations on the fifth, sixth and seventh panels, the world of Maitreya on the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh panels. West-eastwards on the north wall are illustrations of the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra with the eleven-panel screen below these illustrations. Above the entrance of the east wall are donor figures of a male and a female and two attendants and to the north of the entrance is an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra; below it is a three-panel screen with paintings; to the south of the entrance is an illustration of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and below this is a three-panel screen with paintings.

#### **Cave No. 13**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows camellia flowers in the centre, the four slopes have the floral motifs and decorative hangings. Seen below in two rows are the miniature Buddhas. The niche on the south wall houses a statue carved in Qing.

#### **Cave No. 14**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** To the north of the west wall is a portrait of devarāja; the south wall has an illustration of the Sukhāvataḥ-Sūtra drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche of the central column has a set of seven statues cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The west wall is painted with miniature Buddhas; below it an eleven-panel screen on which are drawn bodhisattvas and bhikṣus. On the south wall from west to east are the portraits of Vajrapāṇi Avalokiteśvara, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, Amoghapāṇa Avalokiteśvara, thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara; below it a sixteen-panel screen with the figures of bodhisattvas and bhikṣus. The north wall shows images of Avalokiteśvara; below it another sixteen-panel screen with painted figures. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Śākya and Prabhūtaratna; to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively and below each portrait is a four-panel screen painted with bodhisattvas and bhikṣus.

#### Cave No. 15

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling is damaged; the four slopes have floral motifs and decorative hangings. Adorning the west slope is an illustration of Maitreya-Smūtra; the south and north corners have figures of King Rangqu, the crown prince and Rangqu's concubine are seen in the crowd. The south slope has the Maitreya-Sūtra. An interesting scene of a marriage ceremony of a 500-year old woman is painted on the east and west corners. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall is painted with flowers, pearls arranged in close sequence; the mural on the west slope consists of a set of five standing Buddhas and two bodhisattvas. The south wall has an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra; to the east and west are the sixteen meditations and Ajātaśatru respectively; below is an illustration of an unknown sūtra. The west side of the north wall portrays the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and the twelve great vows. Figure of a tantric bodhisattva can be seen on the east wall to the south of the entrance.

#### Cave No. 16

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has chess-board and floral patterns; the north and south slopes showing garlands and decorative hangings. The north and south walls have preaching scenes with a row of bodhisattvas below.

**Main Hall:** The Buddha platform has nine Buddha statues cast in Qing. Decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas painted in Western Xia are seen on the west, south and north walls. Above the entrance of the east wall are the decorative hangings drawn in Western Xia; below it are drawn lotus flowers and a set of three sitting Buddhas on the right and left respectively. Decorative hangings are seen to the north and south of the entrance with miniature Buddha images below. The ceiling features sculpture in relief with paintings of dragons and phoenixes drawn in Western Xia.

#### Cave No. 17

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The west wall has a tablet from the fifth year of Dazhong Era (851). The north wall has a painting of two trees drawn in Late Tang; below the trees, to the west is the figure of a female attendant. This cave is north-facing. This cave is the famous one which had stored ancient manuscripts and printed scriptures which were discovered by a Taoist priest Wang Yuanlu.

#### Cave No. 18

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues being renovated during Yuan).

**Contents:** *Main Hall:* The caisson ceiling has lotus and floral designs in the centre with kalaviṅka birds; also seen are chestnut lines, circular lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings, flying figures all around. The four slopes show miniature Buddha images with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall has the statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda and one each of the devarāja of northern and southern directions recast in Yuan, and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne and nine bottle shaped doors with flying figures painted on them. The south wall from west to east features stories of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra; below it a three-panel screen with paintings and donors further below; a three-panel screen below showing the World of Maitreya. The north wall shows illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, below it three-panels with depictions of the nine inauspicious deaths and the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra drawn on them. Further below are three panels with the depiction of the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall are two male and female donors with attendants behind them; to the south of the entrance is a portrait of Vimalakīrti from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra and to the north is one of Mañjuśrī also from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra.

#### Cave No. 19

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has floral designs which are peeling off. The four slopes have the decorative hangings, floral motifs and the miniature Buddha figures with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows pomegranates and floral motifs. The four slopes of the ceiling show four meditating Buddhas and two Aupapādakas. Two meditating Buddhas can also be seen on both the north and south slopes and two alms-giving bodhisattvas on the south slope and one on the north slope. The Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with sixteen meditations on both sides adorns the south wall. The north wall shows the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness with the Chapter of Bad Companion to the west.

#### Cave No. 20

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows a lion and lotus; the four slopes are decorated with floral motifs and decorative hangings, miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre also adorn the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains two statues cast in Qing. On the south wall from west to east is an illustration each of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra and Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness with a screen painted below. On the north wall from west to east is an illustration each of Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall and facing each other are a male donor and female donor and behind them are a male and female slave; to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara respectively; painted

below Amoghapāśa is a two-panel screen showing the World of Maitreya and below the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara is another two-panel screen.

### **Cave No. 21**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Yuan).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Male and female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties are on both the north and south sides of the entrance on the west wall. The south wall shows traces of a painting drawn in Yuan.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows two decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties which is the main painting; the west and south slopes show one and two flying figures respectively. Illustrations of sūtras can be seen on the south wall which were redone during the Five Dynasties, a major portion of it has faded.

### **Cave No. 22**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** A set of statues cast in Qing are sheltered in the east-facing niche along with a horse-hoof shaped throne. The ceiling shows the coiled dragon and lotus designs; the four slopes reveal floral designs, circular lines, chestnut lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings. The west, south and east slopes each has a painting of Buddhas of the ten directions, below it a preaching scene amidst the miniature Buddhas. The north slope also has the Buddhas of ten directions along with miniature Buddhas. The rear portion of the south wall has a preaching scene, while the front portion shows the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra. The front portion of the north wall has two scenes of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra. To the north and south of the entrance on the east wall are portraits of Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively depicting the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra.

### **Cave No. 23**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the murals being repainted during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties and the statues renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Miniature Buddhas painted in the Five Dynasties cover the ceiling. Above the entrance of the west wall are the decorative hangings and two cross-legged sitting Buddhas painted during the Five Dynasties. The south wall is Cave No. 24. Above the entrance of the cave are drawn decorative hangings, a flying figure and a devarāja.

**Corridor:** With fragments of a depiction of Māravijaya drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus designs in the centre. The west, south, north and east slopes illustrate the Maitreya-Sūtra, the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara, Amitābha-Sūtra and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra respectively. The niche on the west wall has lined up seven Buddha statues. The south wall illustrates the Chapter of Stūpa Sandarsan parivartana from the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, the Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara and Chapter on the City of Illusion. The north wall has illustrations of three chapters of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. The murals above the entrance of the east wall and to the north and south also depict the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra.

**Cave No. 24**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** There are nine miniature Buddhas in the south-west corner of the ceiling. The west wall shows fragments of the depiction of the Amitābha-Sūtra; the east wall shows the remains of a sūtra depiction.

**Cave No. 25**

**Period of Construction:** Song (the stucco statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** With fragments of depictions of Buddhist historical legends.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus and dragon designs in the centre, while the four slopes have pearl strings, circular lines, flower clusters, and floral motifs and decorative hangings as border designs. Painted around the caisson ceiling are sixteen flying musicians. The west, north and south slopes display the Avatamsaka-Sūtra while the east slope shows the Maitreya-Sūtra. Seen in the niche on the west wall are five statues sculpted in Qing and two celestial animals. The mural on the south wall depicts the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa and that on the north wall picturing Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of Avalokiteśvara, to the north is Amoghapāṣa Avalokiteśvara, and to the south is Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara; below both these portraits are flying figures and donors.

**Cave No. 26**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the stucco statues being renovated in Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Faded depictions of Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra and other sūtras on all walls drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows an Usher Buddha in the centre and Avalokiteśvara (faded) on the north wall, both drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows clouds and floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have the floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha carved in Tang (repaired in Qing) and four statues carved in Qing. The top portion of the south wall shows floral border designs, below it are three rows of miniature Buddhas; the middle portion has the portraits of Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara and others drawn in Middle Tang (Avalokiteśvara being retouched in the Five Dynasties). The north wall has the same art designs on top, with faded miniature Buddhas below. To the north of the entrance of the east wall is a painting of two bodhisattvas, whose lower portions are blurred, while to the south are miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 27**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (murals being redrawn during Western Xia and the statues recast during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has a painting of cross-cudgels, lotus and flaming pearls drawn during Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows round petalled lotus designs. The niche on the west slope shows statues of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna cast in Tang. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha carved in Tang; the north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvattī-Sūtra. Flowers are painted above the entrance of the east wall; the north and south sides each have three bodhisattvas; and a bodhisattva each to the north and south of the entrance.

**Cave No. 28**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** Only the west slope of the ceiling has miniature Buddhas. The depiction of Buddha preaching the dharma on the west wall is damaged, only the Buddha head remains.

**Cave No. 29**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows fragments of miniature Buddhas painted during Late Tang.

**Corridor:** The ceiling features floral and chess-board designs with painted hanging curtains on the northern and southern slopes. Two attending bodhisattvas are on both the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling displays lotus, circular lines, floral motifs. The four slopes show chess-board patterns, flower clusters and celestial musicians. The niche on the west wall contains nine statues sculpted in Qing; a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne with a lotus throne on top. Flying figures are drawn inside the niche. There are miniature Buddhas on the north, south and east walls partially damaged.

**Cave No. 30**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west wall has a picture of Śākyamuni preaching.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha on the ceiling and four sitting Buddhas on the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has the cross-cudgel designs in the centre; the four slopes show circular lines and floral motifs, chess-board and floral patterns and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall features five Buddha statues, and a statue of Śākyamuni and Ānanda with halo carved in Tang; the rest of the statues being cast in Qing. The north wall features two bodhisattvas with halo. The north and south walls show Śākyamuni preaching; on each of the two corners is a bodhisattva. Above the entrance of the east wall is the scene of Śākyamuni preaching; to the north of the entrance is the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, while to the south of the entrance is the thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with a bowl in each hand.

**Cave No. 31**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has a portion of the preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha in the centre of the ceiling drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes show floral motifs and decorative hangings. The south slope has an illustration of the Chapter on Stūpa sandarsan parivartana of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra; the south slope has a picture of Samantabhadra attending the sermon, the north slope shows Mañjuśrī attending the sermon and the east slope illustrates two chapters of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, all drawn in High Tang. The niche on the west wall contains seven statues carved in Qing. The south wall has a portrait of Rocana Buddha; the north wall illustrates the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness. Above the entrance of the east wall is the scene of Śākyamuni preaching, while figures of Indra are seen to the north and south of the entrance.

### Cave No. 32

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall are three preaching scenes painted in the Five Dynasties. Portraits of Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka to the north and south of the entrance respectively have faded.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling has a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs of round petalled lotus in the centre; garlands and decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas painted in High Tang adorn the four slopes. The niche on the west wall shelters a Buddha statue cast in High Tang. On the south wall is a scene of Śākyamuni preaching, painted in Middle Tang; to its east and west are the portraits of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha respectively; a painting of five bodhisattvas drawn in the Five Dynasties is seen below. Seven Buddhas painted during Middle Tang occupy the north wall; the lower portion of the wall has a preaching scene with Avalokiteśvara to the east and a bodhisattva to the west. To the north of the entrance on the east wall are figures of an eleven-headed and six-armed Avalokiteśvara, a bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha and a female donor drawn in High Tang; to the south are the figures of Avalokiteśvara, Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha, a female donor and a donor bhikṣu drawn in the Five Dynasties.

### Cave No. 33

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling was painted with numerous miniature Buddhas in the Five Dynasties of which only five are extant.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral designs; hovering on the four sides are sixteen flying figures; miniature Buddhas are seen on the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains seven Buddha statues cast in Qing. Adorning the south wall is an illustration of the Maitreya-Sūtra, below it are six donors painted in High Tang. The north wall shows miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. To the south of the entrance on the east wall is the portrait of a bhikṣu drawn during the Five Dynasties; pictures of Kṣitigarbha and a bodhisattva painted during Middle Tang; to the north of the

entrance is another bhikṣu figure painted during the Five Dynasties, and a portrait of Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang.

#### **Cave No. 34**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has floral designs drawn in Song; the inner layer of coating on the south side reveals a bodhisattva painted in the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall are seven Buddhas one of which is erased; to the south of the entrance the inner layer of wall coating reveals a portrait of Avalokiteśvara drawn in the Five Dynasties; to the north is a painting of a bodhisattva (blurred). The inner layer of the south wall reveals a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa drawn in the Five Dynasties, the surface layer illustrates the Sūtra of Mañjuśrī painted in Song. The inner layer of the north wall reveals a picture of the western devarāja painted in the Five Dynasties, the north and south walls have two bodhisattvas each.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows dragons in the centre; the four slopes show circular lines, floral motifs and chess-board patterns. The niche on the west wall has a statue of a crossed-legged sitting Buddha cast in Tang; both the north and south walls have illustrations of the Sukhāvataḥ-Sūtra. Two flying figures are seen above the entrance of the east wall, to both the north and south of the entrance are eight bodhisattvas listening to the dharma.

#### **Cave No. 35**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling portrays eleven-headed and eight-armed Avalokiteśvara. Both the north and south walls are decorated with two bodhisattvas attending sermon drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons in the centre; the four slopes have floral motifs, circular lines, floral and chess-board patterns, and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne painted with thirteen Buddhas, halos and flowers. Ten rows of miniature Buddhas are drawn on both the north and south walls. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Aupapādaka Buddha born from lotus, and ten rows of miniature Buddhas on both the north and south sides of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 36**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties. (The cave was originally the ante-room of Cave No. 35.)

**Contents: Corridor:** The north and south walls have portraits of two attending bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** There are three preaching scenes on the ceiling; on the south of the west wall are four Nāgarājas attending the sermon; below it is the portrait of a donor; on the north are four Nāgarājas and their families attending the sermon and below it are six donors. Fragments of a portrait of Samantabhadra painted on the north wall and Mañjuśrī on the south wall.

#### **Cave No. 37**



**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west and north walls have remains of a painting drawn during Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is decorated with four-petalled flowers in the centre; designs of four-petalled flowers on the four slopes. The west, north and south walls are painted with flowers. One corner of the south wall is damaged.

### **Cave No. 38**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows chess-board and floral patterns drawn in Western Xia; a portion of a painting on the north wall drawn in the Five Dynasties is revealed by scraping the surface layer. Decorative hangings are painted in the space above the entrance on the west wall; to the north of the entrance the inner layer shows remains of a *devarāja*; the surface layer shows fragments of a bodhisattva painted in Western Xia, fragments of another bodhisattva figure also painted in Western Xia are seen to the south of the entrance.

**Corridor:** Art designs on the ceiling with fragments of two bodhisattvas on both the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling is damaged. There are circular lines, flower clusters, chess-board and floral patterns on the four slopes; seen on the ceiling of the niche on the west wall are four flying figures and a bodhi-ratna canopy. The top portion of the south wall has decorative hangings, the middle portion shows Śākyamuni preaching the dharma and the inner layer reveals a portion of landscape sketches without colouring drawn in High Tang; the north wall also has a Śākyamuni. The top portion of the east wall has decorative hangings; above the entrance are seven Buddhas and to the north and south of the entrance is a scene of Śākyamuni preaching.

### **Cave No. 39**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** To the south and north of the entrance of the west wall is a row of bodhisattvas and a preaching scene painted during Western Xia. Both the north and south walls have fragments of a preaching scene drawn in Western Xia.

**Corridor:** Buddhist historical legends of the vintage of the Five Dynasties are drawn on the ceiling. Three attending bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia are on both the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche on the central column contains statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples cast in Tang along with two statues repaired in Qing. The north-south- and west-facing niches contain miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang. The niche on the west wall shelters twenty-seven statues chiselled in Tang. The niche on the south wall has three Buddha statues cast in Tang and Qing while the niche on the north wall shows three Buddhas cast in Qing. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang; to the south of the entrance is an illustration of Mañjuśrī drawn in the Five Dynasties with two donor bhikṣus painted below; to the north is an illustration of Samantabhadra painted during the Five Dynasties; four donor bhikṣus are seen below.

#### **Cave No. 40**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes exhibit decorative hangings, the west slope has a bodhi-ratna canopy flanked by a flying figure on both sides; the east, south and north slopes have a preaching scene each. The west wall has a Buddha statue which must have been moved from other places and two bodhisattvas. The north and south walls each have a portrayal of four bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 41**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Five cross-legged sitting Buddhas painted in the Five Dynasties are seen above the entrance of the west wall.

**Corridor:** With fragments of paintings of the Five Dynasties on the ceiling and north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall is painted with a canopy and clouds. Miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre drawn in High and Middle Tang are seen on the north and south walls respectively. Miniature Buddhas can be seen above the entrance with faded bodhisattvas on the north and south.

#### **Cave No. 42**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** An Usher Buddha drawn during the Five Dynasties is the central painting on the ceiling.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows clouds and floral designs in the centre and the four slopes are covered with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. Painted in the niche on the west wall are a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The niche on the south wall shelters the statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Middle Tang. A disciple's head is the only painting not faded in the niche on the north wall. To the north and south of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 43**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; on the four slopes are faded miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has a canopy with flowers as border designs. Some remains of miniature Buddhas can be seen on the north wall.

#### **Cave No. 44**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (paintings and statues being gradually completed during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling displays miniature Buddhas painted in Middle Tang.

**Corridor:** Painted on the ceiling are two devarājas and four bodhisattvas; an Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang is seen on both the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche of the central column contains two Buddha statues cast in Tang. The top portion of the west wall is covered with miniature Buddhas; the middle portion is embellished with an illustration of Nirvāṇa-Sūtra painted during Middle Tang; the lower portion is damaged. On the south wall below the slope are painted miniature Buddhas, and an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra painted during Middle Tang with Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations to the west and east respectively. On the north wall below the slope are miniature Buddhas, a painting of Sukhāvati drawn in High Tang, three portraits of Avalokiteśvara, a part of miniature Buddhas, and a portrait of Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall is inscribed an invocation, to the south of the entrance is an illustration of the Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra painted in Middle Tang; below it an invocation inscribed in the Five Dynasties; to the north of the entrance is an illustration of Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra drawn in Middle Tang; on its two sides are Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations; below it a painting of donor bhikṣus drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 45**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The centre of the ceiling has a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara; to the north and south are portraits of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Avalokiteśvara respectively. Above the entrance of the west wall is a painting of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon; to the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of sūtras. In a corner of the south wall is an illustration of a sūtra. Decorating a corner of the north wall is the illustration of the Avatamsaka-Sūtra. All these were drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling is painted with Buddhist historical legends with auspicious symbols on the northern and southern slopes. A part of depictions of sūtras remains in a corner of the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows floral designs in the centre, the four slopes are covered with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda, Kāśyapa, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta together with devarājas from the northern and southern directions cast in High Tang. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru on the east and sixteen meditations on the west drawn in High Tang. There is no painting above the entrance of the east wall; to the north of the entrance are portraits, one each of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang; to the south of the entrance is a painting of Avalokiteśvara drawn in High Tang.

#### **Cave No. 46**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows chess-board and floral patterns in two rows drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling is painted with an Usher Buddha of Song vintage. Remains of poems and compositions of Tang and the Five Dynasties scholars are on the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; seen on the four slopes are miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda, Kāśyapa, Virūdhaka, Vaiśravaṇa in addition to a bodhisattva which was renovated in Qing. The niche on the south wall has statues of Nirvāṇa Śākya, Buddha's mother, Kṣitigarbha, devas and Sāriputra. The niche on the north wall contains six statues of standing Buddhas cast in Tang. The mural on the east wall has miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 47**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling displays a cross-legged Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties; the paintings on the north and south walls are blurred.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows camellia designs in the centre; garlands and hanging curtains are on the four slopes. Also on each of the slopes is a bodhisattva preaching the dharma flanked by other bodhisattvas listening to the sermon. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows a canopy and two flying figures. The south wall depicts Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara (with twelve arms), and the north wall depicts Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, both drawn in the Five Dynasties; with a bodhisattva each to the north and south of the entrance on the east wall.

#### **Cave No. 48**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The four slopes of the ceiling are covered with miniature Buddhas, the ceiling of the niche on the west wall illustrates the Chapter on the Stūpa sandarsan parivartana. Remains of miniature Buddhas are above the entrance of the east wall.

#### **Cave No. 49**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of a painting of the Five Dynasties remain on the ceiling.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha painted on the ceiling and a sitting Buddha on both the slopes (that on the southern slope is destroyed).

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows clouds and floral designs in the centre, the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas, the ceiling of the niche on the west wall has the Chapter on Stūpa sandarsan parivartana; miniature Buddhas can be seen on the south wall. A preaching scene forms the central painting on the north wall and it is surrounded on the four sides by fragments of miniature Buddhas. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Buddha and two bodhisattvas, drawn in Middle Tang; and remains of miniature Buddhas to the north and south of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 50**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling is damaged; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shows a canopy and two flying figures. Above the entrance of the east wall are remains of miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 51**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The inner layer of the caisson ceiling was painted in Early Tang. The inner layer of the four slopes was painted with miniature Buddhas in Early Tang, while the surface layer was painted with a Buddha and two bodhisattvas in Western Xia. The west wall of the niche on the slope of the west wall has fragments of a sitting Śākyamuni drawn in Early Tang. This cave was discovered in 1947.

#### **Cave No. 52**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling is blurred in the centre. On the four slopes are the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas (partly damaged). This cave was discovered in 1947.

#### **Cave No. 53**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: *Ante-room:*** A corner of the ceiling reveals a painting drawn in Middle Tang. To the north and south of the entrance on the west wall is a bodhisattva drawn in Middle Tang. *Devarājas* drawn in Middle Tang decorate the north and south walls. All are damaged.

***Corridor:*** The south wall shows remains of a landscape.

***Main Hall:*** The caisson ceiling has coiled-dragon and round petalled lotus designs in the centre; decorative hangings and floral motifs are drawn on the four slopes. The west slope illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya; the south and north slopes illustrate Avatamsaka-Sūtra; the east slope illustrates the Devatā-Sūtra. All these are paintings of the Five Dynasties; Buddhas of the ten directions attending the sermon are shown below and miniature Buddhas drawn in Middle Tang. The niche on the west wall contains a Buddha statue and horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in the Five Dynasties. The west portion of the south wall shows the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa painted in the Five Dynasties; the east portion shows a painting from Middle Tang. The top portion of the north wall has an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra drawn in the Five Dynasties. Cave No. 469 is inside the eastern part of the north wall. To the north and south of the east wall entrance are donor bhikṣus. This cave was discovered in January, 1948.

#### **Cave No. 54**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The south and west slopes of the ceiling have miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre. The north slope has remains of a painting of miniature Buddhas. The Buddha statues in the niche on the west wall are damaged; only three seats and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne remain. The south wall has a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, to the east and west are shown the twelve great vows and nine inauspicious deaths respectively; below them are two male donors. The north wall features thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with a bowl in each hand. On the two sides are illustrations of the Chapter on Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra; with two male donors below. To the south of the entrance on the east wall is a portrait of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara with three male donors below; to the north of the entrance is a bodhisattva. This cave was discovered in 1948.

### Cave No. 55

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Wall paintings have faded.

**Corridor:** Art designs drawn in Western Xia are in the centre of the ceiling; garland-and petal- throwing flying angels are on the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The central altar features three sitting Buddhas, three bodhisattvas, Kāśyapa, two warriors, a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The west side of the Buddha altar is not painted. Flaming pearls and lions are seen on the north and south of the altar. The caisson ceiling shows a coiled dragon and round petals of lotus in the centre, the four slopes show the decorative hangings with heavenly musicians hovering on all sides. The west, south, north and east slopes have illustrations of the Paradise of Maitreya, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Avatamsaka-Sūtra, and the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra respectively. The north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west corners have portraits of the Eastern Devarāja Dhṛtarāstra, Southern Devarāja Virūdhaka, Western Devarāja Virūpākṣa and Northern Devarāja Vaiśravaṇa respectively. On the south wall east-westwards are illustrations of the Maitreya-Sūtra, Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra; below them is a twelve-panel screen with drawings of nine chapters of the Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish. The west wall illustrates the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa with a fourteen-panel screen below it painted with chapters of the Sūtra for the Wise and the Foolish on nine panels and chapters of Brahma. On the north wall east-westwards are illustrations of the Sarvadurgati-pariśodhana-uṣṇi-savijayadhāraṇī. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of seven Buddhas, a bodhisattva, an Aupapādaka and two flying figures. To the south of the entrance is an illustration of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa-Sūtra; to its north is an illustration of the Ghanavyūha Sūtra flanked by the explanation of laws on either side; six attending bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia are seen below.

### Cave No. 56

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling is damaged due to fumigation. The four slopes have miniature Buddhas, the lower level of each slope shows a row of flying figures. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of Buddha, Ānanda, Kāśyapa and three bodhisattvas. The niche on the south wall contains a statue of a meditating Buddha; on both sides four statues are missing and only the halos remain. The niche on the north wall has remains of two flying figures and five halos; portraits of miniature Buddha decorate the east wall. The southern corner was damaged during Qing.

### Cave No. 57

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Late Tang).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a scene of Maitreya preaching the law drawn in Late Tang; on its two sides are devarājas attending the sermon; to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively.

**Corridor:** The ceiling was renovated in Late Tang featuring a depiction of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra on top and four sitting Buddhas on both the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has two dragons and lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes have miniature Buddhas, decorative hangings and flying figures hovering all over. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas. The mural on the south wall shows miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; a row of donors is seen below. The north wall is similar to the south wall. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas. Seven Buddhas drawn in Early Tang is destroyed. To the north and south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre.

### Cave No. 58

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows lotus flower designs; attending bodhisattvas on the south wall have faded.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered with garlands and hanging curtains, with a flying figure on the north, south and east slopes. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The north and south walls have a preaching scene each. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene; an attending bodhisattva is seen on both the north and south sides of the entrance.

### Cave No. 59

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling features a Buddha and two bodhisattvas painted in Song. Donors also drawn in Song on the north and the south walls have faded.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus in the centre. Miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings are on the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha and two disciples cast in Sui. Remains of miniature Buddhas are seen on the south wall. The top portion of the north wall also has miniature Buddhas; below them are two faded bodhisattvas drawn in Song. Above the entrance of the east wall and on its two sides are miniature Buddhas. Below it on the north is a bodhisattva.

### Cave No. 60

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows light rings in the centre. The four slopes exhibit decorative hangings; miniature Buddhas are on the north, south and west slopes. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has two flying figures. The top portion of the north and south walls has a row of miniature Buddhas; the middle portion has a preaching scene, the lower portion of the south wall shows ten female donors while the north wall shows some donors of whom only one is unimpaired.

#### Cave No. 61

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated in Yuan).

**Contents: Corridor:** The top and southern and northern slopes of the ceiling are painted with art designs. The south wall features a Buddha while the north wall is painted with celestial deities and female musicians.

**Main Hall:** The statues in the central altar are missing, only a lion's tail remains. A horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne is also seen on the altar; a canopy of bodhi-ratna, bodhisattvas, devarājas, warriors is painted on the back screen, with a standing Buddha painted on its reverse side. Portraits of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara are painted on the south and north sides of the back screen. The ceiling shows coiled dragons and parrots in the centre. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings; the top portion of the four slopes shows Buddhas of the ten directions while the lower portion is covered by miniature Buddhas; below the miniature Buddhas on the west slope are six flying figures, two attending bodhisattvas; on the south slope, miniature Buddhas flock a Divyadundubhimeghanir-ghoṣa Buddha in the centre. On the north slope, the miniature Buddhas flock a "Sarvadurga-music- Buddha" in the centre. On the east, the miniature Buddhas flock an eastern Akṣobhya Buddha in the centre. On the south wall from west to east are the illustrations of the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, Maitreya-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness; below these paintings, from east to west are seventeen female donors from the Cao family and a nine-panel screen; a map of Mount Wutai is on the west wall; below it is a fifteen-panel screen. On the north wall west-eastward are the illustrations of the Ghanavyūha-Sūtra, Devatā-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra; below it is a painting of a nine-panel screen which illustrates west-eastward a scene of Siddhartha leaving his palace at mid-night, and sixteen female donors of the Cao family. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of Vimalakīrti nirdeśa-Sūtra with a chapter from Buddhhaloka, to the north and south of the entrance are the illustrations of the Vimalakīrti nirdeśa-Sūtra with Vimalakīrti on the north and Mañjuśrī on the south. This cave was earlier known as "Wenshutang" (Temple of Mañjuśrī).

#### Cave No. 62

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The east and west sides of the ceiling are covered with miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has a halo, the north and the south walls have a devakanyā and two flying figures each. The south wall and the top portion of the north wall have miniature Buddhas, the middle portion shows a preaching scene and painted at the bottom portion are eleven male and four female donors. Miniature Buddhas are seen on the east wall. This cave was damaged at the time of hewing Cave No. 61.

#### Cave No. 63

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.



**Contents:** The ceiling shows lotus in the centre; seen on the four slopes are the miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall displays a flying figure with halo. The mural on the south wall shows miniature Buddhas. This cave was damaged at the time of hewing Cave No. 61.

**Cave No. 64**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Decorative hangings on the ceiling. A preaching scene on the west slope, the north and south slopes show flying figures and a Buddha attending sermon. The statue in the niche on the west wall is missing, only throne remains. The mural on the south wall shows a preaching scene, two bodhisattvas and a flying figure; painted below are two donors.

**Cave No. 65**

**Period of Construction:** Tang Dynasty (renovated in Song, Western Xia and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has coiled dragons in the centre. The four slopes have circular lines, floral motifs and chess-board patterns. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattva statues cast in Western Xia. The north and south walls are painted with decorative hangings on the top level; the middle level shows a preaching scene from west to east; the lower level is damaged. Decorative hangings are drawn above the entrance of the east wall; there are paintings of canopies and bodhisattvas to the north and south of the entrance.

**Cave No. 66**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling is damaged but there are remains of cloud and floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings partially damaged. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Kāśyapa, Ānanda, two bodhisattvas and two devarājas. The north and south walls have illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra and Sukhāvattī-Sūtra respectively. Remains of miniature Buddhas are seen on the north side of the entrance on the east wall.

**Cave No. 67**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling has the chess-board and floral designs (blurred). On the west there is a Buddha statue cast in Tang and repaired later and the halo on the wall was drawn in Song; the north and south walls have a sūtra illustration each. To the north of the entrance on the east wall, traces of an Early Tang painting are seen on the inner layer.

**Cave No. 68**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The south, west and north slopes of the ceiling show fragments of miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas; sūtra illustrations adorn the north and south walls (damaged).

**Cave No. 69**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has dragon designs in the centre with the four slopes showing a preaching scene and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall has statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas repaired in Western Xia; each of the north and the south walls has two sūtra illustrations. There is a preaching scene to the north of the entrance on the east wall.

**Cave No. 70**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (painting redone during Western Xia and stucco statues renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has pomegranates and grapes drawn in Early Tang. The four slopes have chess-board and floral designs painted in Western Xia. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, three Buddhas and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Early Tang. The top portion of the north and south walls shows decorative hangings, the middle portion has two paintings of the Sukhāvattī-Sūtra and ten alms-offering bodhisattvas and the lower level shows miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre drawn in Early Tang. The mural on the lower portion of the east wall is drawn in Early Tang too.

**Cave No. 71**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The four slopes of the ceiling have miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda, Kāśyapa and two bodhisattvas. The south and north walls illustrate Maitreya-Sūtra and Amitābha-Sūtra respectively.

**Cave No. 72**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the stucco statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling is damaged. The four slopes show circular lines, floral motifs, garlands and decorative hangings. Each of the four slopes has three paintings of Buddha attending sermon, below which are miniature Buddhas with the preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas carved in the Five Dynasties. The top portion of south wall is full of decorative hangings; the middle portion has a portrait of sage Liu Sahe. The top portion of north wall is also covered with decorative hangings; the middle portion has an illustration of the Maitreya-Sūtra. Decorative hangings are painted above the entrance of the east wall, to the north and south of the entrance is a portion of the scene of the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa.

**Cave No. 73**

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling has the floral motifs as border designs. The south and west slopes have remains of miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The west wall has remains of a sūtra illustration. This cave is north facing.

#### **Cave No. 74**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west and north walls have murals drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus designs in the centre; garlands and decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas cover the four slopes. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows chess-board patterns. The south wall is decorated with miniature Buddhas, the north wall shows a sūtra illustration and to the north of the entrance on the east wall are remains of the portraits of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 75**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Late Tang).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes show decorative hangings, floral motifs and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains paintings of a standing Buddha, a bodhisattva and Kṣitigarbha drawn in Late Tang. The south and north walls miniature Buddhas are seen, with a preaching scene in the centre of the north wall. On the south, an altar was built in Late Tang with a Sui statue shifted from elsewhere installed on it. There are also High Tang statues of Ānanda, two bodhisattvas inside the altar and female donors painted in Late Tang beneath it. Three preaching scenes are painted above the entrance of the east wall, to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of a standing Buddha and a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha respectively.

#### **Cave No. 76**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (renovated during Song, Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The surface of the ceiling shows an Usher Buddha. The south slope shows decorative hangings all drawn in Yuan. The inner layer has screens painted in Song; the north wall surface has fragments of decorative hangings drawn in Yuan, the inner layer has a screen painted in Song with garlands and hanging curtains as border designs drawn in Tang. The surface layer on the south wall shows a bodhisattva drawn in Yuan while the inner layer has a screen painted in Song. The north wall has the same features as the south wall with remains of a Tang painting in a corner.

**Main Hall:** The central altar has the statue of a cross-legged preaching Buddha cast in Song. Below the Buddha throne is a portrait of attending bodhisattva drawn during Song. Ten flying figures occupy the top portion of the south wall, at the lower level west-eastwards are illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra, Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra and Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. Along the top of the north wall are ten flying figures, below which from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and the Avatamsaka-Sūtra. The top portion of the east wall features ten flying figures with pagodas drawn on the entrance.

### **Cave No. 77**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are adorned with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The horse-hoof shaped altar of west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples in addition to the remains of four thrones. On the north and south walls west-eastwards are two bodhisattvas and a faded preaching scene.

### **Cave No. 78**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has the remains of Western Xia floral designs in a corner.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragon designs in the centre while the four slopes have circular lines, floral motifs, and chess-board and floral designs drawn during Western Xia. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang. The south wall has two sūtra illustrations drawn during Western Xia. The inner layer reveals a depiction of Amitābha-Sūtra painted during Early Tang. The north wall shows two sputra illustrations drawn in Western Xia and the inner layer reveals the Maitreya-Sūtra also drawn in Early Tang. The inner layer above the entrance on the east wall shows seven Buddhas drawn in Early Tang; on both the north and south of the entrance is a portrait of Avalokiteśvara.

### **Cave No. 79**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows three standing Buddhas drawn in High Tang. A niche above the entrance of the west wall is destroyed. On both the north and south of the entrance there is a faded painting of Vajra warriors drawn during High Tang. The west side of the south wall has fragments of a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn also in High Tang, the east has a sūtra illustration drawn in the Five Dynasties. The west side of the north wall has fragments of a portrait of Rocana Buddha painted in High Tang, the east section has fragments of paintings of the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** With fragments of portraits of donors.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples, four bodhisattvas cast in High Tang. The north and south walls are covered with miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall is a damaged preaching scene painted during the Five Dynasties; to the north and south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas painted during High Tang (the lower portions are destroyed).

### **Cave No. 80**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The ceiling has three cross-legged sitting Buddhas; the four slopes show miniature Buddhas. Miniature Buddhas are on the south and west walls drawn in High Tang and on the north wall drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 81**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (paintings being redrawn in Western Xia and the stucco statues being repainted in Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The south wall shows traces of the figure of a bodhisattva drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has the dharma-cakra painted in the centre; chess-board and floral designs adorn the four slopes. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang. A horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne is also seen in the niche. The top portion of both the north and south walls is painted with decorative hangings; the middle portion shows two illustrations of the Sukhāvati-Sūtra and the lower portion is damaged. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of two sitting Buddhas; a preaching scene is painted on each of the north and south sides of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 82**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre; circular lines, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas can be seen on the four slopes. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall also shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered with miniature Buddhas. Each of the south and the north walls has a damaged portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara respectively.

#### **Cave No. 83**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Traces of illustration of the Samantabhadra-Sūtra drawn in the Five Dynasties can be seen to the north of the entrance of the west wall.

**Corridor:** The inner layer of the north wall reveals Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragon designs in the centre; the four slopes have the circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board and floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains five Buddha statues cast in Qing. The north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvati; the west end shows two Buddhas, the lower level shows flowers. Above the entrance and to the north and south of it, are three preaching scenes.

#### **Cave No. 84**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The north side of the entrance on the west wall and the lower portion of the north wall both have fragments of paintings drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** A damaged Usher Buddha in the centre of the ceiling, with bhikṣus drawn in the Five Dynasties on the north wall.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows a dharma-cakra in the centre; the four slopes have circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board and floral designs. Painted on the ceiling of the niche on the west wall are a bodhi-ratna canopy and two flying figures. The top portion of the north and south walls has decorative hangings drawn in Western Xia, the middle portion shows an illustration of Sukhāvati-Sūtra, drawing in the lower portion of which is damaged. The space above the east wall is painted with decorative hangings and two bodhisattvas; on the south of it two and on the north three attending bodhisattvas (damaged).

### Cave No. 85

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties, Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** To the south and north of the entrance on the west wall are portraits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, both drawn in Yuan but severely damaged.

**Corridor:** The ceiling features miniature Buddhas sitting on lotus, the north and south slopes have auspicious symbols. On the north wall is the portrait of the Late Tang monk Zhai Sengrong with three donors and one attendant first painted in Late Tang, repainted in the Five Dynasties. The south wall features three male donors and seven attendants also first drawn in Late Tang and repainted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The central altar contains statues of Śākyā Buddha, Kāśyapa cast in Late Tang and a statue of Ānanda cast in Qing. The ceiling has lion and lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes have floral motifs and decorative hangings. The west, south, north and east slopes illustrate the Maitreya-Sūtra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Avataḥsaka-Sūtra and Laṃkāvatāra-Sūtra respectively. On the south wall east-westwards are illustrations of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Amitābha-Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-Sūtra; seen at the bottom is a fourteen-panel screen with depictions of sūtras on the panel. The west wall has a scene of the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa; below it a fourteen-panel screen illustrating the Sūtra for the Wise and the Foolish. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrations of the Ghanavyūha-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra; at the lower level is a fourteen-panel screen with sūtra illustrations. Illustrated above the entrance of the east wall is a chapter of the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra; on the south is another illustration of the same sūtra, below are five donor bhikṣunīs; the north side illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra; three bhikṣus and three female donors at the lower level.

### Cave No. 86

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The ceiling has floral designs and the four slopes show decorative hangings. Seen on the west wall are Buddha halo and disciples; bodhisattvas adorn the north and south walls. All are damaged or faded.

**Cave No. 87**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling has cross-cudgels and floral designs painted in Western Xia. The four slopes have circular lines and floral motifs with a painting drawn in High Tang on the inner layer. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples, two bodhisattvas and one devarāja cast in High Tang. Inside the niche all the walls are covered by paintings of High Tang and the Five Dynasties, among them are four figures belonging to the eight supernatural categories (devās, dragons etc.) on both the northern and southern sides. The top portion of the north and the south walls is painted with decorative hangings drawn in Western Xia; Sukhāvātī-Sūtra is illustrated in the middle portion while the lower portion is destroyed. The east wall shows a painting of bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia which has fallen off.

**Cave No. 88**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling has round petalled lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes show circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board and floral designs; below it are decorative hangings (damaged). The niche on the west wall contains statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda and Kāśyapa all cast in High Tang. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and the south wall, the Amitābha-Sūtra.

**Cave No. 89**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The west and north slopes of the ceiling have in a corner remains of circular lines and floral motifs with decorative hangings all faded. The ceiling inside the niche of the west wall shows a bodhi-ratna canopy and two flying figures. The inner layer of the north and south walls reveals High Tang paintings but the painting on the surface layer was drawn in Song (faded).

**Cave No. 90**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** In a corner of the west wall are fragments of a devarāja, and two donors.

**Cave No. 91**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Cave No. 90 is situated to the north of the entrance on the west wall.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang. Outside the niche are two devarāja statues. An illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the east and sixteen meditations to the west is

seen on the south wall. The illustration on the north wall is about Maitreya-Sūtra; the east and the west sides have an illustration of the World of Maitreya. A portrait of Vaiśravaṇa is seen to the north of the entrance on the east wall. This cave was hewn around the eleventh year of the Dali Era of Tang (777).

### **Cave No. 92**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (the stucco statues renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling has lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes show floral motifs and decorative hangings; the north and west slopes have an illustration of the Nirvāṇa-Sūtra, the north slope shows Sāriputra. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha. The south wall has an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with the sixteen meditations to the east and Ajātaśatru to the west. The north wall has an illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with the twelve great vows to the east and nine inauspicious deaths to the west; below it a painting of female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall illustrate the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively.

### **Cave No. 93**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (the stucco statues renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling is damaged. The three slopes of north, south and west show floral motifs and decorative hangings; the west slope has miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva in the centre; the north and the south slopes have miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains three statues cast in Tang and four statues cast in Qing. There is a fragment of a sūtra illustration in one corner of the south wall with a Buddha portrait standing on the western side. On the north wall there is an illustration of the Maitreya-Sūtra; on the west side again a standing Buddha.

### **Cave No. 94**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The space above the entrance of the west wall has fragments of Late Tang paintings, recognizable are devarājas and warriors.

**Corridor:** The central painting of the ceiling shows floral patterns painted in Song while the north and south slopes have decorative hangings. The top portion on the south wall is painted with five sets of Buddhas of ten directions drawn also in Song; the middle portion shows a picture of eight attending bodhisattvas; the inner layer reveals Zhang Yitan's inscription. The north wall has same features as the south wall with Zhang Yichao's inscription revealed on the inner layer.

**Main Hall:** The central altar has a statue of a sitting Buddha preaching the law cast in Song along with statues of disciples, two bodhisattvas and Laozi the Taoist patriarch, cast in Qing. The right side of the screen shows the bodhi-ratna canopy, with two flying figures and two bodhisattvas; the rear side shows paintings of an Usher Buddha; each of the north and south sides has a figure of an attending bodhisattva; all above three items were Song drawings. The ceiling shows the coiled dragon designs in the centre; the four slopes have the floral motifs, decorative hangings, chess-board and floral patterns. The top section of the west wall has flying figures drawn in Song; the middle portion has miniature Buddhas and the lower



level shows frescoes drawn in Tang; further below an illustration of the Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish. The north and south walls have the same paintings, at the lower level of the north wall, only the female donors vary. The top portion of the east wall has a line of flying figures; above the entrance is the drawing of a huge lotus; to the north and south are the figures of miniature Buddhas and the inner layer reveals fragments of donors painted in Tang.

#### **Cave No. 95**

**Period of Construction:** Yuan (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* Painted on the ceiling are floral designs and a six-word mantra.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche in the main hall contains statues of a devarāja and two bodhisattvas with the six-armed Avalokiteśvara as the main statue. The niche ceiling is also inscribed with a six-word mantra along with floral designs; inside the niche on the west wall is the light of Buddha with Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta on both sides; the north and south walls have three bodhisattvas each; the north and south walls have two arhats facing them, while the west wall has no paintings. Outside the niche, the north, south and west walls have two, three and two figures of arhats respectively.

#### **Cave No. 96**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** This is a famous cave of the giant sitting Maitreya statue, thirty-three metres tall, cast in Early Tang and repaired during the Republic of China.

#### **Cave No. 97**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has coiled dragon designs in the centre. The four slopes have the designs of pearls on rolling clouds and floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains statues of two disciples cast in Tang and statues of a Buddha, two devarājas cast in Qing. The niche also has a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The west end of the south wall has the portrait of donor bhikṣu holding a flower with sixteen arhats; below it a screen with paintings on the panels. The north wall has the same paintings as the south wall. Two of the sixteen arhats are still visible on both the northern and southern sides of the entrance on the east wall.

#### **Cave No. 98**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the stuccos being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The ceiling shows traces of paintings of Buddhist historical legends, the south slope has six auspicious symbols, the north slope has seven. Eight donors including Cao Yijin and his son and two attendants repainted on the south wall. The north wall also shows donors.

**Main Hall:** The central Buddha altar contains the statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha from the Five Dynasties and two statues from Qing. The centre of the caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons and parrots;

the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The top portion of the four slopes has the painting of Buddhas of the ten directions attending sermon; below it are miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. On the south wall east-westwards are illustrations of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, Maitreya-Sūtra; below it are the figures of seventeen female donors from the Cao family, a thirteen-panel screen painted with the chapters of sūtras for the Wise and the Foolish. The west wall illustrates the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa; a sixteen-panel screen showing sūtra illustrations is painted below. On the north wall from west to east are illustrations of the Devatā-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, Avatamsaka-Sūtra etc.; a thirteen-panel screen painted with the chapters from the Sūtra for the Wise and the Foolish is below. Above the entrance of the east wall is the chapter on Upāyakauśalya from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra, to the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra respectively, one wall featuring Vimalakīrti and the other Mañjuśrī. Below them are the princess of Uighur and seven male and female donors.

### Cave No. 99

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling is painted with lion and lotus designs, with floral and hanging curtains decorating the four slopes. The preaching scenes on the four slopes are damaged. The niche on the west wall highlights Bhaiṣajyaguru, totalling eighteen portraits of him along with bodhisattvas. Inside the altar there is a sitting Buddha flanked by disciples, bodhisattvas, devarājas, in addition to Samantabhadra. The west wall inside the niche features halo in the centre, flanked by three disciples on each side. The north and south walls feature four bodhisattvas, two disciples and the eight categories of supernatural beings. The opening of the altar is decorated with curtains with Samantabhadra on the south and Mañjuśrī on the north. The north wall has illustrations of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, to the east and west are scenes of Avalokiteśvara rescuing people from all calamities, and the thirty-three manifestations. Above the entrance of the east wall are paintings of three cross-legged sitting Buddhas; to the south is Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, to the north is Cintāmaṇī-Cakra Avalokiteśvara.

### Cave No. 100

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (stucco statues renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On both the north and south of the entrance on the west wall and also on the north and south walls is a faded portrait of a devarāja.

**Corridor:** The south slope of the ceiling has two auspicious symbols. The south wall shows five donors who include Cao Yijin and his son, and six attendants. The north wall features a Uighur princess who is Cao Yijin's wife and ten female donors and five female attendants.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral and round petalled lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes have decorative hangings, Buddhas of the ten directions and the miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. Four Devarājas feature prominently: Dhṛtarāstra of the eastern direction in the north-east corner, Virūdhaka of the southern direction in the south-east corner, Virūpākṣa of the western direction in the south-west corner and Vaiśravaṇa of the northern direction in the north-west corner. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two warriors cast in Qing. Outside the niche and on both sides of the pedestal are statues of Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Sūtra for Redemption

from Indebtedness, Amitābha-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra; at the lower level is a painting of Cao Yijin leading the march of his army. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrations of Brahma-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra; below it paints the Uighur princess on her journey. The story of Vimalakīrti-Sūtra is painted on both south and north of the entrance on the east wall; the south featuring Mañjuśrī with Cao Yijin's army below; the north featuring Vimalakīrti with the ending of the Uighur princess's procession featuring below. This cave is known in Dunhuang manuscript as "the cave of Cao the Great Man".

**Cave No. 101**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling has only one miniature Buddha left. The west wall has a damaged statue of Śākyamuni, the north wall has fragments of a painting in a corner.

**Cave No. 102**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling is destroyed. Much of the fresco inside has faded. There are traces of miniature Buddhas on the north and west walls.

**Cave No. 103**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the stucco statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** With Cave No. 105 situated inside the south wall, and Cave No. 104 inside the north wall, the west wall features fragments of adevarāja on the north of the entrance.

**Corridor:** The south wall has fragments of a portrait of Kṣitigarbha while the north wall that of Vaiśravaṇa.

**Main Hall:** A colourful caisson ceiling with floral motifs with miniature Buddhas on the four slopes. The niche on the side of the west wall features Tang statues of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas repaired in Qing, in addition to two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. Inside the niche are fragments of paintings of disciples and bodhisattvas with a portrait of a bodhisattva on both sides of the curtains which adorn the opening of the niche. The south wall of the cave is painted with depictions of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, while the north and east walls feature the Amitāyus-Sūtra and Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra respectively. The lower parts of all the three walls are damaged.

**Cave No. 104**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling is destroyed. The niche on the north wall has a Buddha statue installed inside, which was removed from Cave No. 477. This cave is situated inside the north wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 103.

**Cave No. 105**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling is destroyed. The niche and the south wall have a Buddha statue of Late Tang repaired in Qing. The cave is situated inside the south wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 103.

#### **Cave No. 106**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** There is a niche on the west wall with faded floral designs and chess-board patterns in the centre on the ceiling and traces of a standing Buddha on the southern slope. To the south of the entrance one sees fragments of an illustration of the Samantabhadra-Sūtra.

#### **Cave No. 107**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The north and west slopes of the ceiling are painted with miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre (partially damaged). The south slope has miniature Buddhas which are blurred. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows cross-cudgels and floral designs, three sitting Buddhas can be seen on the west slope along with Aupapādaka; the east, south and north slopes also have three sitting Buddhas each. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, the Devatā-Sūtra, below them are seven male donors. West-eastwards on the north wall are the illustrations of the Amitābha-Sūtra and the Maitreya-Sūtra (partially destroyed); ten female donors are painted below. To the north of the entrance on the east wall is the portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara with two female donors below; to the south of the entrance is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara with three male donors below.

#### **Cave No. 108**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (the statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The centre of the ceiling preserves a half of the paintings of Buddhist historical legends. Ten pictures of auspicious figures are extant on the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The central altar has statues of a sitting Buddha, two Buddha disciples and four devarājas cast in Qing. The caisson ceiling is damaged in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas; the north, south and east slopes each have a set of three paintings of Buddha attending the sermon; miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre are below the three Buddhas. On the south wall from east to west are illustrations of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, and Maitreya-Sūtra; below it are ten donors, four females and a six-panel screen with paintings of the Sūtra for the Wise and the Foolish; the west wall illustrates the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa; on the north wall from west to east are illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Devatā-Sūtra; a four-panel screen having chapters from the Sūtra for the Wise and Foolish. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of the Chapter of Buddh-loka of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. On the south side of the entrance is Mañjuśrī from Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra; on the north is Vimalakīrti from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. The lower parts of the walls have suffered damage.

**Cave No. 109**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has fragments of decorative hangings. The west, south and east slopes display miniature Buddhas (partially damaged). The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has a preaching scene (northern side faded); the south wall illustrates Maitreya-Sūtra; on the south side of the entrance on the east wall only one devarāja remains in a severely damaged painting.

**Cave No. 110**

**Period of Construction:** Tang Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling is destroyed. Only one niche on the west wall survives. A large portion of the mural inside the niche has peeled off. This cave was sealed off in the fortification construction of the Dunhuang grottoes in 1963.

**Cave No. 111**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The east and west slopes show miniature Buddhas with a meditating Buddha in the centre. The north and south slopes also have miniature Buddhas with a preaching Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains a set of three Buddha statues carved in Qing. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with sixteen meditations on either side. Sūtra illustrations are seen in one corner of the north wall. In 1921, this cave was vandalized by Russians and there are traces of Russian characters scribbled in pencil on the walls.

**Cave No. 112**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* With faded Song depiction of Buddha preaching.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows four floral designs on clouds in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre. Inside the niche on the west wall there is a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas, and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Tang and repaired in Qing. Twenty-seven sitting Buddhas are painted on the four slopes of the niche. On the four walls there are paintings of the nine Nāgas baptising Prince Siddhartha, ordaining by shaving, preaching etc. From west to east on the south wall are depictions of the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra and Amitāyus-Sūtra; on the north wall west-eastwards are illustrations of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the west wall is the illustration of Māravijaya-Sūtra; on the south and north sides of the entrance are the Mahāsthāmaprāpta-Sūtra and Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra.

**Cave No. 113**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** At the time of renovation during the Five Dynasties, an invocation was inscribed above the entrance of the west wall of the ante-room which is decorated by curtain hangings.

**Corridor:** With fragments of the depiction of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, Kāśyapa, Ānanda and a bodhisattva cast in Tang. Outside the niche on either side is a statue of devarāja. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with the sixteen meditations to the east and Ajātaśatru to the west. At the west end is a yakṣa. The north wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra; at the west end is a yakṣa. The Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra is painted above the entrance on the east wall. To the south of the entrance is the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara; to the north is the scene of the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara. All the lower parts of the four walls are damaged.

#### **Cave No. 114**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** This cave is severely damaged. The caisson ceiling has floral designs, while fragments of miniature Buddhas with hanging curtains are seen on the western and southern slopes.

#### **Cave No. 115**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has paintings of the Five Dynasties of which four sitting Buddhas are extant.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre with decorative hangings on the four slopes (blackened by fumigation). There are miniature Buddhas on the four slopes, a portion of which is damaged. The north and the south walls each carries the figure of a bodhisattva, a two-panel screen painted with a bodhisattva (the lower portion is damaged). On the south wall are depicted Kṣitigarbha and two bodhisattvas; on its east are miniature Buddhas. The north wall illustrates paintings of a thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and a sitting Buddha, a bodhisattva to its west, and a Kṣitigarbha, a Bhaiṣajyaguru and six bodhisattvas to its east all painted in Middle Tang. The south side of the entrance on the east wall has a damaged portrait of Avalokiteśvara along with a Kṣitigarbha while on the north side a damaged bodhisattva and a Kṣitigarbha all drawn in High Tang. This cave was started in High Tang but the murals on the south and north walls were completed in Middle Tang.

#### **Cave No. 116**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** With Song paintings of art designs on the ceiling and hanging curtains on the south slope.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows camellia designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by swan and floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, Kāśyapa, Ānanda and two bodhisattvas repaired in Qing in addition to two statues of bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with the sixteen meditations and Ajātaśatru, painted in Middle Tang and repainted in Song. Seen on the north wall is the Sūtra for Maitreya which was painted in Middle Tang and redrawn in Song. Above the entrance of the east wall is a damaged painting of miniature Buddhas. Portraits of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara are painted to the north and south of the entrance respectively. All these were painted in High Tang.

#### Cave No. 117

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** A meditating Buddha painted on the ceiling with a preaching scene on both the north and south walls of the vintage of the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Floral designs drawn in High Tang are in the centre of the caisson ceiling. The four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas painted in High Tang with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and one bodhisattva cast in Tang (repaired in Qing). The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra drawn in Middle Tang with the sixteen meditations on the east and Ajātaśatru on the west; the west end has a halo painted in Western Xia. The north wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra, on the west end is a halo from Western Xia. On the south side of the entrance on the east wall is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, to the north is Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvaraboth drawn in Middle Tang.

#### Cave No. 118

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** There is an incomplete painting on the ceiling drawn in Song.

**Corridor:** Fragments of Song paintings on the ceiling and the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling displays floral designs. Circular lines and pearl strings in border designs on the four slopes which also show flowers and decorative hangings drawn in Song. The inner layer of the south slope reveals miniature Buddhas painted in High Tang. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Song and repaired in Qing, in addition to the statues of four disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The Amitāyus-Sūtra illustration painted during Song is on the south wall flanked by sixteen meditations, below them are male donors (blurred) and at the western tip is a flying figure. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra which has on both sides the twelve great vows, below them are female donors (blurred); a flying figure is visible at the west end. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are Buddha and two bodhisattvas, to its north and south are Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively.

#### Cave No. 119

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Depiction of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra on the ceiling (western end damaged), fragments of devarājas on the west wall, faded depiction of Mañjuśrī's feats on the south wall, all painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** Damaged preaching scene on the ceiling, faded Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara on the south wall, and fragments of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara on the north wall all painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Art designs with lotus and other floral motifs in the centre of the caisson ceiling, miniature Buddhas on the four slopes along with hanging curtains. On the west wall there is a niche with three uncoloured Buddha statues cast in Qing, and a preaching scene painted on the ceiling inside the niche. The western wall inside the niche has halo in relief flanked by two bodhisattvas and four disciples. Beneath the niche there is a faded attending bodhisattva. On both north and south of the niche there is a portrait of a bhikṣu. The south wall is painted with five bodhisattvas inside a lotus pond, to its west is a bodhisattva holding a bottle with five faded donors below. The north wall is also painted with five bodhisattvas inside a lotus pond, to its west is a bodhisattva holding a willow branch, with five faded donors below. The east wall has seven Buddhas painted above the entrance with a bodhisattva in a lotus pond painted on both north and south of the door.

#### **Cave No. 120**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A preaching scene on the ceiling, an invocation flanked by two bodhisattvas atop the entrance on the west wall, with devarājas to the north and south of the door. On the north wall a depiction of Samantabhadra's feats and on the south wall that of Mañjuśrī both damaged with only a corner remaining. All these were painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** Depiction of Bhaiṣajyaguru's feats faded in the centre on the ceiling. The south wall a thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and the north wall a thousand hands and bowls Mañjuśrī both faded. All are paintings of the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling reveals four-petalled flower patterns in the centre. The four slopes have garlands and hanging curtains. Miniature Buddhas are painted on the four slopes. The niche on the west wall shelters a set of five Buddhas cast during Qing. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with the sixteen meditations on either side. Seen at the west end is the figure of a disciple; donor figures are seen at the lower level. A preaching scene is depicted on the north wall, at the western end is a disciple which is blurred from below. An illustration of Buddha's nirvaṇa is painted above the entrance of the east wall. Devarāja portraits which are blurred at the bottom are seen to the north and south of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 121**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of Avalokiteśvara on the ceiling. The west wall features an invocation, both sides have a Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon, in addition to four Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha on both sides of the door. The north and south walls both have depiction of a sūtra in damaged condition. All the paintings were from the Five Dynasties.



**Corridor:** Depiction of a sūtra in the centre of the ceiling with hanging curtains on the southern and northern slopes. The south wall features the portrait of Cao Yijin and the north wall that of his queen, the Uighur princess with attendants. All are paintings of the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is damaged in the centre. Garlands and hanging curtains and miniature Buddhas drawn during High Tang decorate the four slopes. The niche on the west wall houses a set of seven Buddha statues and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne, cast in Qing. The south wall features a scene showing the trinity of Buddha preaching the dharma drawn in High Tang below which is a landscape painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. Further below are the portraits of fourteen male donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north wall has the same features as the south wall but instead of male donors there are twelve female donors. Above the entrance on the east wall is a mural drawn during the Five Dynasties depicting the Chapter on Buddhhaloka of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. The south side of the entrance displays an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Mañjuśrī drawn in the Five Dynasties; five male donors are shown below. To the north of the entrance is the same Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti; below are four female donors and two female attendants.

### Cave No. 122

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of a Song painting on the ceiling. On the west wall, a faded Song invocation with bodhisattvas on both sides. To the north and south of the entrance each is a scene of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. On the south wall is Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, while opposite a Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara on the north wall. All were Song paintings.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha on the ceiling, and a preaching scene on both the north and south walls painted in Song.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling has clouds and flowers drawn in High Tang, with garlands and hanging curtains and miniature Buddhas on the four slopes also drawn in High Tang. A set of five Buddha statues cast in Tang is sheltered in the niche on the west wall along with two statues of bodhisattvas on a warrior platform, cast in Qing. The south wall portrays a preaching scene painted in High Tang, repainted in Song, with a Song painting of a throne below. The doorway of a bottle shape has flowers painted on it. The north wall illustrates Amitāyus-Sūtra drawn in High Tang, with Ajātaśatru to the east and sixteen meditations to the west; below it is a throne, flowers are painted on the bottle-shaped doorway. A preaching scene and two female donors drawn in High Tang are above the entrance on the east wall, to the south of the entrance is the portrait of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, below it is a painting of donors drawn in Song; on the north is a portrait of Kṣitigarbha drawn during High Tang, below it are the donors painted in Song.

### Cave No. 123

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Avalokiteśvara preaching on the ceiling, with Avalokiteśvara also painted on the west, south and north walls. One more bodhisattva holding a bowl is painted on the north of the entrance on the west. A depiction of Mañjuśrī on the north wall has faded. Thirteen donors are painted at the lower level on all the walls. All paintings are of Song vintage.

**Corridor:** A preaching scene on the ceiling, a bodhisattva on both the north and south walls painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Art designs are seen in the centre of the ceiling, while the four slopes are painted with decorative hanging curtains and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains five Buddha statues made during Qing, while the paintings inside the niche are of older vintage. Below the niche is an invocation inscribed at the time when the cave was hewn. The Amitābha-Sūtra is illustrated on the south wall below which is a painting of donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The Maitreya-Sūtra is illustrated on the north wall; at the lower level is a painting of female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of seven Buddhas, a figure of devarāja each is painted on the north and south sides. This cave was cut in the third year of the Wansui Era (695-697) of Empress Wu. Its ante-room and Cave No. 124 were renovated in the third year of the Guangshun Era (953 A.D.) of Late Zhou.

#### **Cave No. 124**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene drawn during the Five Dynasties. On the west wall is an invocation. On both north and south of the entrance is a devarāja painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** Kṣitigarbha in the centre of the ceiling and a "Water-and-Moon" Avalokiteśvara on both the north and south walls, all painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Floral designs in the centre of the caisson ceiling, while the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. Painted on the ceiling of the niche on the west wall is a portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha. The south wall portrays a preaching scene with male donors below. The north wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra with female donors below. A preaching scene is depicted above the entrance on the east wall. All these were drawn in the Five Dynasties. On each of the two sides is a portrait of a standing Buddha painted during High Tang and a bodhisattva image each on the north and south.

#### **Cave No. 125**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has a portrait of the four-armed Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. Paintings on the north and south walls have faded or damaged.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha on the ceiling, a sitting Avalokiteśvara on both north and south walls, all painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. A statue of Buddha cast in Qing is sheltered in the niche on the west wall. This statue has been brought from elsewhere. A preaching scene is depicted on the south wall, an invocation is inscribed below and on the two sides are donors. The north wall features a preaching scene, below it are donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. Miniature Buddhas are painted on the east wall. The ante-room of this cave and those of Caves 123 and 124 were renovated in the third year of Guangshun Era (953 A.D.).

**Cave No. 126**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* To the south of the entrance on the west wall is a male donor and on the south wall there are fragments of a painting, all drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** One third of the painting of Buddhist historical legends remains on the ceiling, with auspicious figures on the northern and southern slopes, all painted in the Five Dynasties. The portraits of the Cao family members with attendants painted in the same period have faded.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows Aupapādakas born out of lotus drawn during High Tang, the four slopes are filled with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas painted during High Tang. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows chess-board and floral patterns in the centre. The east and west slopes each display seven sitting Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas, two Aupapādakas. The north and south slopes each have four Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and two Aupapādakas drawn during High Tang. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the east and sixteen meditations to the west. Painted below on a screen are the thirty-three manifestations of Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north wall has similar paintings as the south wall with the screen showing Avalokiteśvara helping people out of perils. An illustration of a preaching scene can be seen above the entrance of the east wall. On the east side of the entrance is illustrated the Sūtra for Avalokiteśvara drawn during High Tang. At the lower level is a two-panel screen painted during the Five Dynasties. On the north of it are the portraits of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha drawn during Middle Tang, a painting of a two-panel screen drawn during the Five Dynasties is below. This cave was being built in High Tang but was completed only after the second year of Jian Zhong Era (782), it was reconstructed during the time of Cao Yuanzhong of the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 127**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling exhibits lotus and three rabbits (joining as one) in the centre. The four slopes of the ceiling have decorative hangings and are covered with miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre on each slope. There is a Buddha statue cast in Qing housed in the niche on the west wall. Painted on the south wall are the Buddhas of the five directions and four devarājas; below it are the male donors. The north wall illustrates the Avatamsaka-Sūtra painted during Late Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall are the portraits of a male and a female donor painted during Late Tang, to the north and south of the entrance, one on each side are figures of a sitting Buddha and Avalokiteśvara; below it are the portraits of donors painted during the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 128**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling has lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Buddha as the central image on each slope. The niche on the west wall contains five colourless clay idols cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. On the south wall, from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra which were redrawn during the Five Dynasties. At a lower level is a painting of

male donors (blurred) drawn during the Five Dynasties. On the north wall, from west to east are the illustrations of Amitābha-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra which were redrawn during the Five Dynasties. There is a row of female donors painted at the bottom (blurred). Above the entrance on the east wall are portraits of six donors drawn during the Five Dynasties, to the south of the entrance is an illustration of the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra; at the lower level are four male donors, to the north of the entrance is a narrative painting, at the lower level are female donors (blurred), all drawn during the Five Dynasties.

### **Cave No. 129**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On the south side of the entrance is a scene of nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha (blurred).

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The centre of the ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows a canopy of bodhi-ratna and two flying figures, the west slope has the same features, the south slope features four standing Buddhas and an attending bodhisattva drawn during High Tang; the north slope has a mural of three standing Buddhas and an attending bodhisattva; the east slope shows eight standing Buddhas and two attending bodhisattvas. An illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra drawn during Middle Tang is depicted on the south wall with Ajātaśatru to the west and sixteen meditations to the east; portraits of eighteen male donors drawn in the Five Dynasties are at the lower level. The top portion on the north wall illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya painted during Middle Tang with a row of female donors below. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. On the south is a portrait of Amoghapāṣa Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang along with three male donors painted during the Five Dynasties. On the north of the entrance is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara painted during Middle Tang with female donors (blurred) below, drawn during the Five Dynasties. This cave was hewn in High Tang with only the ceiling and the western niche being painted. The rest of the original paintings were drawn during Middle Tang.

### **Cave No. 130**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** On the south wall there is a niche on top with damaged Buddha and bodhisattva statues with damaged or faded paintings inside the niche of High Tang and Western Xia vintage. On the north wall there is a niche of similar condition. Beneath the niche is a portrait of Governor Yue Tinghuai painted in High Tang.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs; the west slope is painted with a halo while the north, south and east slopes have floral patterns. The west wall has a huge statue of a sitting Maitreya Buddha which is about twenty-six metres high, this is the famous "Southern Giant Buddha" at Dunhuang. Portraits of bodhisattvas by the side of this giant statue were painted in Western Xia. On the east wall there are bodhisattvas painted in Western Xia, but the inner layer reveals the depiction of the Buddha's nirvāṇa painted in High Tang. Two windows are there above the entrance, one above the other. The top of the window wall has art designs while the northern and southern walls of it have faded bodhisattvas, three on each side. All these were painted in Western Xia. The lower window has art designs on the top wall, while on the southern wall there are six bodhisattvas in a row with three nāgarājas standing below. On the north wall of it there are three bodhisattvas above and two nāgarājas below. All these are paintings of Western Xia

**Cave No. 131**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (rebuilt during Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses statues of a warrior and two bodhisattvas cast during Qing. The north and south walls have two statues each of Taoist gods. This cave was originally hewn during Tang but was totally redone during Qing and turned into a Taoist shrine.

**Cave No. 132**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** Two sitting Buddhas painted in the Five Dynasties on the ceiling.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the west wall houses six statues cast during Qing, a statue of bodhisattva cast during the Five Dynasties and repaired in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with sixteen meditations on the east side with a painting of male donors (blurred) drawn during the Five Dynasties below. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; on its east side is the depiction of the twelve great vows, below it a painting of seven female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south side of the entrance on the east wall illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Mañjuśrī painted during the Five Dynasties, at a lower level are four male donors. On the north side of the entrance is another illustration of the same Sūtra painted during the Five Dynasties showing Vimalakīrti; three female donors are seen below.

**Cave No. 133**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A corner of the ceiling has fragments of a painting drawn in Song. The west wall shows four bodhisattvas painted in Northern Song around the entrance with faded musicians below. The south wall opens to Cave No. 135 and the north wall opens to Cave No. 134.

**Corridor:** Its south wall has a Peacock King and the north wall has a Garuda painted in Song.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the west wall contains five statues and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. On the south wall from west to east is a sūtra illustration the lower portion of which is blurred. There are fragments of an illustration of Maitreya-Sūtra with a single panel screen below illustrating the Maitreyavya-karana. On the north wall from west to east is the fragment of a sūtra illustration, and a half of the damaged illustration of Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra with a three-panel screen below. Above the entrance on the east wall is illustrated the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti, below which is a two-panel screen. On the north side of the entrance is the same illustration showing Mañjuśrī; below which is a two-panel screen depicting the Chapter on Expediency.

**Cave No. 134**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Late Tang and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling is rectangular in shape; the four slopes have circular lines, border designs of floral motifs and miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the north wall has five statues. The east wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; painted on either side of the south wall entrance are camellia flower designs. The west wall features the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra. This cave is south-facing and was hewn at the same time as Cave Nos. 133 and 135.

#### **Cave No. 135**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Late Tang, Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling has the same designs as those of Cave No. 134. The niche on the south wall contains five Buddha statues cast during Qing. There is a horse-hoof shaped throne. The west wall illustrates the Devatā-Sūtra, the north and south sides show Brahma's enquiries. The Vajracchedikā-Sūtra is illustrated on the east wall. On either side of the entrance on the north wall are portraits of Vaiṣravaṇa, a large portion of it is damaged. This cave is north-facing, and is inside the south wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 133.

#### **Cave No. 136**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Art designs on the ceiling and preaching scenes on the west wall have faded. The north wall leads Cave No. 137.

**Corridor:** The ceiling is decorated with floral designs. The north and south walls feature ceremonial banners and canopies painted in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The west and north slopes of the ceiling have chess-board patterns and floral designs, decorative hangings, flying figures etc. The niche on the west wall houses seven statues cast during Qing. The north and south walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra; above the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene; to the north and south are lotus ponds and bodhisattvas with a bottle-shaped door painted below with ratna.

#### **Cave No. 137**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west wall shows fragments of a painting drawn during Song.

**Main Hall:** The north slope of the ceiling has miniature Buddhas. The north wall has a statue of a meditating bhikṣu. The east and the west walls have a screen each. This cave is south-facing, and was originally meant to be a cave for meditation during the Five Dynasties. Later when Cave No. 136 was renovated a major portion of this cave was damaged.

#### **Cave No. 138**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The centre of the ceiling has wooden structures put up during Qing, while its southern end is painted with a six-armed Avalokiteśvara. Miniature Buddhas are on the four slopes. There is a wooden gate connected with the wooden eaves with bodhisattvas and donors painted on the wooden columns during Yuan. The original paintings above the gate on the west wall are blocked by the Qing wooden structure. The paintings of devarāja on both the north and south of the gate have either faded or been blackened by smoke. The sitting Buddha painted in Yuan on the south wall is blurred, while the upper portion of the north wall is painted with a sitting Buddha flanked by two donors. Below it is the entrance to Cave No. 139.

**Corridor:** With miniature Buddhas on lotus painted in the centre of the ceiling with fourteen standing Bhaiṣajyagurus on the northern and southern slopes. On both the north and south walls were painted four bodhisattvas with four bottle-shaped doors during Yuan.

**Main Hall:** The central altar has a statue of sitting Buddha cast in Late Tang and repaired during Qing and twelve statues of child-giving goddesses along with a six-armed Avalokiteśvara and two bodhisattvas. The ceiling shows camellia flower designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with celestial musicians hovering around with a preaching scene in the centre on each slope. The west wall features Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha; on its north and south sides are painted bodhisattvas attending the sermon. On the south wall from west to east is the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra. The north wall illustrates the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, Avatamsaka-Sūtra and Paradise of Maitreya. On the east wall above the entrance are the portraits of ten male and female donors; on the south side of the entrance is an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra, below it are fifteen female donors; on the north side is an illustration of the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, at a lower level are seven female donors and two maids.

#### **Cave No. 139**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a sitting Buddha in the centre. The north wall has a statue of a monk cast in Tang and repaired in Qing. The west wall illustrates the Devatā-Sūtra. Portraits of eight female donors are at the bottom (blurred). The east wall illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the south wall is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara; on both the east and west sides of the entrance is a bodhisattva. This cave was a meditating cave originally. It is inside the north wall of Cave No. 138.

#### **Cave No. 140**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang and the Five Dynasties (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall contains a Tang statue of sitting Buddha repaired in Qing and four statues of disciples carved during Qing. There is a painting of Bhaiṣajyaguru on both north and south of the curtains of the niche. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra. On the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are pictures of Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively.

#### **Cave No. 141**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Paintings depicting the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra on the west and north walls are either destroyed or blurred.

**Corridor:** With the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara on the ceiling painted in Song while the Song paintings of male and female donors on the north and south walls are severely damaged.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has round petalled lotus in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains five Buddha statues cast in Qing. Inside the niche there are eleven Bhaiṣajyagurus along with flying figures. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra from west to east; on the west side are sixteen meditations; below it is a three-panel screen with Ajātaśatru on two panels and sixteen meditations on the third panel along with the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and the chapter on filial piety, below which is a two-panel screen and a painting drawn in Song on the Chapter of Evil Friends. The north wall illustrates from west to east the Sūtra for Bhaiṣajyaguru; on the west side are the twelve great vows, a three-panel screen with paintings of nine inauspicious deaths and twelve great vows along with the Paradise of Maitreya; below it is a two-panel screen with scenes of the Pureland of Maitreya. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara; on the north and south sides of the entrance are the illustrations of Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra respectively.

#### Cave No. 142

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Seven sitting Buddhas painted above the entrance with a scene of Mañjuārī's feats on its south.

**Corridor:** With floral designs in the centre of the ceiling and hanging curtain painted on the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows round edged lotus and Dharma-cakra in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains nine Buddha statues cast in Qing. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra; a preaching scene is painted above the entrance of the east wall and to the south and north of the entrance respectively.

#### Cave No. 143

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall contains a set of seven Qing Buddha statues. There is a Late Tang stone inscription of which only the relief of two dragons on top is visible.

#### Cave No. 144

**Period of Construction:** Middle and Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).



**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and floral designs. The niche on the west wall shelters Tang statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas repaired in Qing and a statue of *devarāja* cast also in Qing. The south wall illustrates from west to east the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra*, *Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra* and the *Vajracchedikā-Sūtra*. Similarly on the north wall from west to east are the *Avatamsaka-Sūtra*, *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra* and *Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness*. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are the figures of male and female donors; to the north and south of the entrance are paintings of the thousand-armed *Mañjuśrī* holding bowls and the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed *Avalokiteśvara*.

#### Cave No. 145

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Song).

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows lotus and three rabbits (joining as one), chess-board and floral patterns. A set of five standing Buddhas and two bodhisattvas each are painted on the east and west slopes, the south slope has three standing Buddhas, a bodhisattva and a musician while the north slope has three standing Buddhas and two bodhisattva figures. From west to east on the south wall are illustrated the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra* and *Vajracchedikā-Sūtra*. On the north wall from west-eastwards are illustrations of the *Sūtra for Bhaiṣajyaguru* and *Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness*. There is no painting above the entrance on the east wall. To the south of the entrance is a portrait of *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara*; to the north is that of *Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara*. The western niche was reconstructed when Cave No. 146 was hewn during the Five Dynasties. The east, south and north walls illustrate important *sūtras* which were redrawn during the period of Five Dynasties and early Song.

#### Cave No. 146

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated during Song, Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The south wall has a blurred fresco of a bodhisattva painted during Song. The north wall has a portrait of an attending bodhisattva drawn during Yuan.

**Main Hall:** The central altar has a statue of sitting Buddha cast in Song and repaired in Qing, and statues of two disciples, two bodhisattvas, two attending bodhisattvas and four warriors cast during Qing. The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons and parrots in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and floral motifs. The top portion of the west slope shows *Amitāyus Buddha* of the west flanked by the Buddhas of the ten directions going to attend the sermon; below it are the portraits of miniature Buddhas. The *lokapālas* of the four directions are painted in the four corners of the ceiling. On the south wall from east to west are illustrations of the *Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness*, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra*, *Amitābha-Sūtra* and *Paradise of Maitreya*. The west wall has a scene of the fight between *Sāriputra* and *Raudrākṣa* and below this painting is a ten-panel screen with the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Fool* painted on the panels. On the north wall from west to east are the illustrations of *Devatā-Sūtra*, *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra*, *Avatamsaka-Sūtra* and *Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛochā-Sūtra* etc. Above the entrance of the east wall is shown a chapter on *Buddhakṛetra* from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra*; to the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* showing *Vimalakīrti* and *Mañjuśrī* respectively. Below the illustration on the north and south sides is a set of five attending bodhisattvas painted during Song.

#### Cave No. 147

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Corridor:** Floral designs in the centre of the ceiling with hanging curtains painted in the northern and southern slopes in addition to faded bodhisattvas on the south and north walls all painted in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows three rabbits (joining as one) and lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha in the centre. The central painting on the ceiling of the niche on the west wall is of chess-board patterns and floral designs. There are seven Buddha figures each on the east and west slopes, out of which five are large and two are small. The south and north slopes have five sitting Buddhas each. There are four panels of a screen on the west wall inside the niche painted with sūtra stories. On both the northern and southern sides of the curtains of the niche are Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. From west to east on the south wall of the cave is the illustration of the Amitābha-Sūtra below which is a four-panel screen painted with Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations; the Paradise of Maitreya, below which is a four-panel screen with the painting of the World of Maitreya. West-eastwards on the south wall is the illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene, to the north and south of the entrance are the portraits of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara respectively.

#### **Cave No. 148**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Late Tang and Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of a preaching scene of Tang vintage on the ceiling with Tang stucco figures of devarājas, warriors and followers as well as a lion on each side of the entrance on the west wall. Some of these were repaired in Qing.

**Corridor:** The Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness painted in High Tang on the ceiling and the northern and southern slopes is severely damaged. On the north and south walls the Western Xia paintings of donors are extant.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling is painted with miniature Buddhas drawn during High Tang. The west side altar features Mahāparinirvāṇa with mourning Buddhist disciples and celestial beings, princes of various states, Buddha's foster mother and bodhisattvas etc. a total of seventy-two statues cast in Tang and renovated later. The niche on the south wall shows a painting of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara dhāraṇī and other charms (damaged), a cross-legged sitting Buddha statue has been shifted here from elsewhere. The niche on the north wall contains statues of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and a cross-legged sitting Buddha which has been shifted here from elsewhere. On the ceiling inside the niche there is a picture of Buddha with Bhaiṣajyaguru and Kṣitigarbha on both the slopes. There is a relief of Sūrya and Moon God on both sides of the halo on the north wall inside the niche (Sūrya on the east has disappeared), with screens painted on the three walls depicting charms. There is a scene of nirvāṇa on the west and Samantabhadra on the east of the curtains at the opening. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn in High Tang; the south side of the entrance illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the north and sixteen meditations to the south; the north side of the entrance illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with the twelve great vows to the north and nine inauspicious deaths to the south drawn in High Tang. This cave was built in the eleventh year of Dali Era (777) of Tang by Li Dabin. Two accounts on building and renovating the cave by Li Dabin and his descendants during Tang are inscribed in the ante-room.

**Cave No. 149****Period of Construction:** Yuan.**Contents:** The painting on the west wall is of a meditating cross-legged sitting Buddha with two disciples, four devar̥jas and six bodhisattvas. The south and north walls illustrate the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is the figure of a flaming Vajra warrior; to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of Avalokiteśvara holding a bell and cudgel, and four-armed Avalokiteśvara respectively.**Cave No. 150****Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Qing).**Contents: Ante-room:** On the north and south sides of the entrance on the west wall is a painting of Taoist celestial warrior and the south wall has a painting of seven Taoist celestial warriors both painted during Qing.**Corridor:** The south and north walls feature paintings of horse-headed and ox-headed warriors drawn during Qing.**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows round petalled lotus flowers in the centre painted during Late Tang; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a multi-jewelled stūpa in the centre, drawn during Late Tang. The niche on the west wall contains five statues cast in Qing. Inside the niche there are devar̥jas and celestial animals by the side of the curtains at the opening. The ceiling and the four slopes feature thirty-four Bhaiṣajyagurus and four other bodhisattvas. To the north of the curtain there is the depiction of Mañjuśrī painted in Late Tang. Two dragons painted in gold with landscape flower paintings in the background, all works during Qing, are seen inside the altar. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra, Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra painted during Late Tang. On the north wall from west to east are two illustrations of Ghanavyūha-Sūtra drawn during Late Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall is illustrated the Paradise of Maitreya drawn in Late Tang. To the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Amitābha-Sūtra respectively painted during Late Tang. Judges of the hell and their soldiers painted during Qing are seen at the lower portion of the wall.**Cave No. 151****Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).**Contents: Corridor:** There are fragments of paintings of Middle Tang on the north and south walls.**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling displays floral designs; the four slopes are painted with circular lines, floral motifs, decorative hangings, chess-board and floral patterns. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows floral patterns in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings. The north and south walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is inscribed an invocation (destroyed); portraits of two bodhisattvas each are painted on the north and south sides of the entrance.**Cave No. 152****Period of Construction:** Song (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** Floral designs in the centre and hanging curtains on the northern and southern slopes of the ceiling with six Buddhas and ten bodhisattvas on both north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** On the central altar are statues of Ānanda and Kāśyapa cast in Tang, statues of bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra cast in Song and statues of two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north, south and east sides of the Buddha throne are painted with precious offerings of Uighur style while the west side shows bodhisattvas, devarājas and donors painted by the Uighur donors. The centre of the ceiling is painted with dharma-cakra and four dragons; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The west slope has three scenes of Buddhas attending sermon, at a lower level are miniature Buddhas; in the centre Buddhas of the ten directions attending sermon. The west wall features an Aupapādaka bodhisattva drawn during the Uighur regime, the central painting is of a bodhisattva preaching the dharma, on the two sides are miniature Buddhas painted during Western Xia. The north, south and east walls feature miniature Buddhas painted during Western Xia.

### Cave No. 153

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** With a faded bodhisattva drawn in Western Xia on the north and south walls.

**Main Hall:** The west slope of the ceiling features miniature Buddhas painted during Middle Tang, the north slope has portraits of two bodhisattvas painted during Western Xia. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall displays floral designs in the centre. The east and west slopes have six standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas each, painted during Middle Tang, on either side of the Bhaiṣajyaguru is an attending bodhisattva. The south and north slopes have two standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas flanked by a bodhisattva drawn during Middle Tang. The south and north walls feature Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī respectively drawn during Western Xia. Flying figures are on the south wall. A preaching scene drawn in Western Xia is seen above the entrance of the east wall, on the north and south sides of the entrance are bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia, one on the north side and two on the south side. This cave was damaged at the time of hewing Cave No. 152 in early Song, only a niche survived. The paintings on east, south and north walls were added during Western Xia.

### Cave No. 154

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The ceiling has camellia flower designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a bodhisattva carved in Middle Tang. On the top layer of the south wall, from east to west are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Suvarṇaprabhāsa-Sūtra; the lower layer illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya and Saddharma-puṇḍrīka-Sūtra, the two ends display the portraits of Vaiśravaṇa and Avalokiteśvara. On the north wall from east- westwards are illustrated the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra; at the lower level are portraits of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva and four flower holding attending bodhisattvas drawn during Western Xia; at the two ends are portraits of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva painted during Western Xia. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting showing three sitting Buddhas and a preaching scene drawn in Western Xia; painted on the top portion of the north and south sides of the entrance are the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra and Suvarṇaprabhāsa-Sūtra respectively.

### Cave No. 155

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (the frescoes being redrawn in the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The west slope of the niche on the west wall portrays seven standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas. The south wall illustrates Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the east and the sixteen meditations to the west. The north wall illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya, at the west end is the figure of a bodhisattva (which has been disfigured by smoking).

#### **Cave No. 156**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has an illustration of Māra-vijaya in the centre; the south side shows the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra and the north side, the Sūtra for Redemption of Parents. A painting of seven Buddhas covers the space above the entrance of the west wall, to the north and south of the entrance are the portraits of Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively. The north wall features the portraits of three female donors of the Song family and an account of the Mogao Caves is inscribed on the western corner. The south wall has the pictures of Zhang Yichao and Zhang Zhunshen along with the figures of five male donors.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows the round petalled lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs and decorative hangings; the north, south, east and west slopes illustrate the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra respectively. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of a sitting Buddha and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Inside the niche are Avalokiteśvara in three different incarnations on the ceiling and the slopes along with other bodhisattvas. On the south of the curtains at the opening there is Samantabhadra, on its north there is Mañjuśrī. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of the Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra and the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra. West-eastwards on the north wall are the illustrations of Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, Devatā-Sūtra. Above the entrance on the east wall are three male donors, one female donor and two attendants. The south side of the entrance illustrates the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra; the north side illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra.

#### **Cave No. 157**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows lotus designs in the centre; the west and north slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and garland decorations which are partially damaged. The cave is north-facing and was damaged during construction work in Qing. Paintings on the four walls are peeling off and faded.

#### **Cave No. 158**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre. The north and south slopes have six and ten sitting Buddhas respectively. The lower portion of the south wall features four bhikṣus; that of the north wall shows two bhikṣus and two donors in Tibetan costumes both drawn during Middle Tang.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling displays a painting of Sukhāvātī of the South with miniature Buddhas, the Sukhāvātī of the west (?) with miniature Buddhas and the Sukhāvātī of the north. From south to north

on the east slope are paintings of bodhisattvas attending sermon, Sukhāvati of the south-east direction, sermon attending bodhisattvas, Sukhāvati of the east, sermon attending bodhisattvas, Sukhāvati of the north-east direction and sermon attending bodhisattvas. From south to north on the west slope are paintings showing sermon attending bodhisattvas, Sukhāvati of the south-west, sermon attending bodhisattvas, Sukhāvati of the west, sermon attending bodhisattvas, Sukhāvati of the north-west, sermon attending bodhisattvas. The south slope illustrates the Sūtra for Samantabhadra; on either side are the sermon attending bodhisattvas. The north slope illustrates the Sūtra for Mañjuśrī on either side are the sermon attending bodhisattvas. The altar on the west wall houses a statue of fifteen metre Śākyamuni in Mahāparinirvāṇa. The west wall features the eight categories of supernatural beings, Brahmadeva, Buddha disciples, bodhisattvas and five flying figures showering petals. The south wall has a statue of a standing Buddha, the north wall of a sitting Buddha. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara flanked by a bodhisattva on either side; to the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra respectively.

### Cave No. 159

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of miniature Buddhas remain in a corner on the western slope of the ceiling. On the west wall the Western Xia paintings if the surface layer is removed. These reveal paintings of devarājas and damaged portraits of bhikṣus. On the south wall there are fragments of the depiction of the Amitābha-Sūtra. The north wall is the entrance to Cave No. 160.

**Corridor:** There are art designs on the ceiling. On the north and south walls are designs painted in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows winding branches and camellia flower designs in the centre. The west and south slopes are painted with decorative hangings and each of the four slopes is partially covered by miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Kāśyapa, Ānanda, bodhisattvas, devarājas cast in Middle Tang. Inside the niche there are Buddhas painted on the slopes of the ceiling. On the west and south walls inside the niche are paintings depicting Karma. On the south of the curtains at the opening of the niche there are paintings of the feats of Samantabhadra. On the north those of Mañjuśrī with a map of Mount Wutai on a two-panel screen. From west to east on the south wall are illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra and Paradise of Maitreya. On the north wall, west-eastwards are illustrations of the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of the chapter on Buddhakṣetra from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. On the north and south sides of the entrance are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti respectively.

### Cave No. 160

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. The east wall has three Vajra warriors with one more on the west wall along with a donor bhikṣu.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has miniature Buddhas. The north wall has statues of Śākyamuni in sitting pose, two disciples and two damaged statues. Drawn below the Buddha throne are the donor figures, and

drawings on the wall are of six bodhisattvas and eight disciples. The east wall has a portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru, with the twelve great vows on the north and the nine inauspicious deaths on the south. The west wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the south and sixteen meditations to the north. A painting of seven sitting Buddhas adorns the space above the entrance of the south wall, to the east and the west of the entrance are illustrations of the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and Mañjuśrī-Sūtra respectively. This cave is facing south.

#### **Cave No. 161**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows chess-board patterns and floral designs which have faded. A preaching scene drawn during Song covers the area above the entrance of the west wall (also faded). A picture of a bodhisattva listening to dharma drawn during Late Tang is revealed after peeling off the surface coating. The corridor ceiling shows chess-board and floral designs drawn in Song; the north and the south walls have bodhisattvas drawn in Song which are blurred.

**Main Hall:** The central Buddha altar contains statues of two donors in Tibetan costumes. The caisson ceiling of the cave is covered by the portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara; the four slopes are painted with floral motifs and decorative hangings. Each of the four slopes shows bodhisattvas listening to dharma in ten groups with Avalokiteśvara in the centre. The west wall illustrates Avalokiteśvara Sūtra in the centre, encircling it are bodhisattvas listening to dharma in twenty-eight groups. The south wall illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra in the centre surrounding which are twenty-eight groups of bodhisattvas listening to dharma most of which have peeled off. The north wall illustrates Samantabhadra-Sūtra in the centre, which is encircled by twenty-eight groups of bodhisattvas listening to dharma most of which have peeled off. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Avalokiteśvara on Mount Potalaka, on the north and the south sides of the entrance are shown bodhisattvas listening to dharma in twelve groups each.

#### **Cave No. 162**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The south wall features a six-armed Avalokiteśvara painted during the Five Dynasties. The corridor ceiling displays the portrait of an eight-armed Avalokiteśvara in the centre; the north and south slopes feature five sitting Buddhas each.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling in the main hall shows lotus flower designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall shelters a set of seven statues of Avalokiteśvara cast during Qing. Miniature Buddhas cover the north, south and east walls.

#### **Cave No. 163**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues being redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall contains seven Buddha statues and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. The south wall features a six-armed, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, the west side

describes the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara. The mural on the north wall shows Amoghapāṣa Avalokiteśvara; on the west side is an incantation of the same deity.

#### **Cave No. 164**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Five sitting Buddhas are painted towards south above the entrance of the west wall. Below them are the blurred figures of four bodhisattvas. To the north of the entrance are fragments of a portrait of a bodhisattva. The south wall features two cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The south and north walls have two bodhisattvas each.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral patterns drawn in Western Xia. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls each have portraits of two alms-offering bodhisattvas which are partially damaged.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has floral and round petalled lotus designs in the centre. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of Buddha cast in Tang and repaired during Qing. Statues of six disciples and a statue each of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra on both sides of the platform cast in Qing. The top portion of the south wall has decorative hangings; from west to east the middle portion features a canopy with jewels and a halo, and illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra and Amitābha Sūtra; below it are offerings, a bodhisattva and three musicians drawn during High Tang. The paintings on the north wall are identical as those on the south wall. Above the entrance of the east wall is the figure of a meditating Buddha, the south side of the entrance illustrates the Sūtra for Samantabhadra and the north side illustrates the Sūtra for Mañjuśrī. This cave was hewn in High Tang. During the Five Dynasties its entrance was renovated and during Western Xia the murals were repainted.

#### **Cave No. 165**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On either side of the west wall is a portrait of devarāja drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** A picture of the Peacock-King on the ceiling.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows floral designs in the centre painted during Western Xia; the four slopes are covered by circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board and floral patterns, decorative hangings and each slope has four flying figures at the lower level. The niche contains seven Buddha statues. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra. The north wall features sūtra illustrations. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene; on the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. Most of these were cast and drawn in Western Xia.

#### **Cave No. 166**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).



**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows a damaged painting drawn during Song. Above the entrance on the west wall is inscribed an invocation; on the south of the door there is Mañjuśrī; on top of it is the Maitreyavya-karana drawn during Song, while its lower portion is the entrance of Cave No. 167. The north side of the door shows Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha; and also the entrance of Cave No. 168; on its south are fragments of a painting of Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha. The north and south walls have a painting each of devarājas.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has a six-armed Avalokiteśvara in the centre drawn during Song. The north and south slopes have seven meditating Buddhas each, in sitting posture; both the north and south walls have a mural each showing the eight categories of supernatural beings (blurred).

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral patterns and clouds. The four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two bodhisattvas cast in Tang (repaired during Qing) and four statues of disciples cast in Qing. West-eastwards on the south wall are a sitting Buddha, seven cross-legged sitting Buddhas, seven standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas, three portraits of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva; the middle portion shows two bodhisattvas and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva drawn during Middle Tang; below are twelve female donors and a donor bhikṣunī drawn during Song. The north wall features miniature Buddhas, with a preaching scene drawn during Middle Tang in the centre. Below are four female donors painted during Song. To the south of the entrance on the east wall are portraits of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Kṣitigarbha, three male donors, a bodhisattva drawn in Song and seven female donors. On the north side are paintings of Kṣitigarbha, Amitābha Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and Prabhūtaratna; fourteen of the miniature Buddhas, a preaching scene painted during Five Dynasties, portrait of a bodhisattva and six male donors drawn during Song.

#### **Cave No. 167**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows two floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall houses a Buddha image and six statues of disciples cast in Qing. Inside the niche miniature Buddhas are painted on the ceiling. An original painting of a preaching scene is covered by the Qing statues. Curtains are painted on top of the niche with three sitting Buddhas on both sides. On the south outside the niche is Samantabhadra, on its north, Mañjuśrī. The south and the north walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra and the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra respectively, the west side of the north wall shows the twelve great vows. To the south and north of the entrance on the east wall are inscriptions of Song with white powder.

#### **Cave No. 168**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the statues renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The south and north walls illustrate the Paradise of Maitreya and sūtras respectively. On the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are portraits of devarāja one each to a side. The cave is on the north of the door on the west wall of the ante-room.

#### **Cave No. 169**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has three preaching scenes. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during Song. Both the north and south of the entrance have paintings of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon.

**Corridor:** A picture of the Peacock-King flanked by three sitting Buddhas on each of the northern and southern sides.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has coiled dragon designs in the centre; the four slopes have circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board and floral patterns and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two devarājas cast in Tang (repaired during Qing), three statues of disciples cast in Qing. The south, north and east walls are covered by miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 170**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling reveals a damaged painting in a corner. Above the entrance on the west wall is the faded invocation inscribed during Song when the cave was renovated; a portrait of a bodhisattva; the south side features a preaching scene and the north side shows Avalokiteśvara in Mount Potalaka. The south wall has a damaged painting and the north wall the Devatā-Sūtra which was destroyed.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas drawn during High Tang. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of Buddha cast in Song and repaired during Qing. Inside the niche there is a preaching scene on the west wall with five disciples flanking Buddha on each side. There are four bodhisattvas on both the north and south walls inside the niche. Nine Buddhas are painted above the Buddha altar. A bodhisattva is painted on both sides of the curtains at the opening of the altar. The mural on the south wall of the cave illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya, the north wall features Buddha preaching the Sūtra of filial piety. Above the entrance of the east wall is a set of three sitting Buddhas, to the north of the entrance is a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa.

#### **Cave No. 171**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is inscribed an invocation (blurred). To the south and north of the entrance are portraits of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively, painted during Song; below Virūdhaka are the donors; the lower level of the portrait of Vaiśravaṇa shows a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls depict Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively drawn during Song with male and female donors at the respective lower levels.

**Corridor:** The ceiling depicts a portrait of six-armed Avalokiteśvara; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls feature the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra both drawn during Song; at the lower level on both the walls are faded donors.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows clusters of flowers painted during High Tang; the four slopes are covered with miniature Buddhas, garlands and hanging curtains. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang and statues of four disciples cast during Qing. Inside the niche there are six standing Bhaiṣajyagurus (two damaged) and two bodhisattvas (one damaged) on the western slope. On its northern and southern slopes there are four standing Bhaiṣajyagurus with two bodhisattvas respectively. On each of the west, north and south walls are six sitting Buddhas with bodhisattvas in the lotus ponds at the lower level. On the south of the curtains at the opening there is Bhaiṣajyaguru, and to its north, Avalokiteśvara. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the east and sixteen meditations to the west. The same sūtra is illustrated on the east wall too. On the south and north of the entrance are Ajātaśatru and the depiction of sixteen meditations.

### Cave No. 172

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during Song with the scene of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon on both sides. On the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively. The south wall has the painting of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and the north wall has Mañjuśrī with thousand arms with a bowl in each hand. A hole is there on both these walls damaging the paintings. Atop the hole on the north wall are sitting Buddhas of the five directions.

**Corridor:** Floral designs on the ceiling, bodhisattvas on northern and southern walls respectively. The south wall opens the entrance to Cave No. 173.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre (blurred). The four slopes are painted with the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas; each of the four corners has a flying figure. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples, bodhisattvas, sitting bodhisattvas in ardha padmāsana and devarājas cast in Tang and repaired in Qing. The ceiling of the altar is painted with the Trinity preaching surrounded by flying figures and clouds. The west wall inside the niche has a halo flanked by two disciples in relief, while the north and south walls have three disciples each. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra showing Ajātaśatru on the west side and sixteen meditations on the east side. At the western end of both walls are Avalokiteśvara. The Sukhāvatī Sūtra is illustrated in the space above the entrance on the east wall; at the top, on the south side of the entrance are portraits of Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara and four bodhisattvas; the middle portion illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra; the lower portion is blurred. On the north side at the top is a portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru and four bodhisattvas; the middle portion illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra; the lower level shows donors painted during Song.

### Cave No. 173

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (the stucco statues being redecorated in Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the south wall contains a set of three statues cast in Qing. The east wall illustrates Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra. The west wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra.

### Cave No. 174

**Period of Construction:** Song.

**Contents: Corridor:** It is the corridor of the ante-room of Cave No. 172.

**Main Hall:** It is the ante-room of Cave No. 175. The ceiling shows a preaching scene. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall has lotus flowers with coloured clouds on its two sides. The middle portion of the west wall has a corridor leading to Cave No. 175; on the north and south sides of the passage is a figure of a bodhisattva. Above the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene, a bodhisattva is seen to its north.

### Cave No. 175

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the paintings redrawn in Song and the stucco statues cast during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** It is Cave No. 174.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The north and south slopes each have a flying figure. The south wall has a donor bhikṣu; the north wall a donor bhikṣu and a donor all drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes show decorative hangings, miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha in the centre. On a low platform on the west wall are statues of a Buddha and four disciples cast in Qing. On the south wall west-eastwards are a disciple, two bodhisattvas and a Bhaiṣajyaguru. On the north wall from west to east are two disciples, two bodhisattvas and Avalokiteśvara and seven Buddhas sitting in a lotus pond (partially damaged). Above the entrance of the east wall is an inscription, on both north and south of the entrance is a devarāja and a donor.

### Cave No. 176

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A portrait of "Moon-and-Water" Avalokiteśvara drawn in Song is on the west slope of the ceiling. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during Song and on either side are two bodhisattvas. On both north and south of the entrance are Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha drawn in Song. The south wall illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and the north Samantabhadra-Sūtra.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows the portrait of Kṣitigarbha with the ten kings of hell and a depiction of transmigration in the centre; the north and south slopes have nine sitting Buddhas each, all drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs painted in High Tang in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains nine statues cast in Qing. Inside the niche there are four flying figures and a preaching scene on the ceiling, disciples and bodhisattvas on the west, north and south walls; all painted in High Tang with a halo painted in Song on the west wall. From west to east on the south wall are depictions of Avalokiteśvara below which are four

male donors painted during the Five Dynasties; an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west and sixteen meditations to the east; portraits of Sūrya, Candra and Klitigarbha Bodhisattvas drawn during Middle Tang. West-eastwards on the north wall are depictions of Kṣitigarbha, miniature Buddhas with Bhaiṣajyaguru, Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara in the centre of the miniature Buddhas, and a Middle Tang Avalokiteśvara. Above the entrance on the east wall are the paintings of Cintamañi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, a painting of a bodhisattva holding a bowl drawn in the Five Dynasties and two cross-legged sitting Buddhas. On the north of the entrance are Bhaiṣajyaguru, Kṣitigarbha, Prabhūtaratna and two miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang; an attending bodhisattva and twenty-six miniature Buddhas drawn during the Five Dynasties. On the south are Kṣitigarbha, two bodhisattvas and fourteen miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang; an attending bodhisattva and eighteen miniature Buddhas drawn during Song.

#### **Cave No. 177**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows cross-cudgel patterns in the centre; the east and west slopes are covered by flowers and a halo. Both the north and south walls have an attending bodhisattva.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the south wall shelters two disciple statues cast in Qing. Inside the niche are miniature Buddhas on the ceiling with Klitigarbha and Maitreya and bodhisattvas drawn on the south wall. Atop the niche is a row of miniature Buddhas. Outside the niche on both east and west is a flying figure with Samantabhadra on the east and Mañjuśrī on the west. The east wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with twelve great vows to the north and nine inauspicious deaths to the south. The west wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the north and sixteen meditations to the south. This cave is situated on the south of the corridor of Cave No. 176. The north wall was added during Song while renovating the corridor of Cave No. 176.

#### **Cave No. 178**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The west slope of the ceiling is covered by floral designs. Both the east and west walls have an attending bodhisattva drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes are painted with a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha preaching. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall displays chess-board and floral designs. On both east and west of the niche is a devarāja painted on the wall. The west and east walls depict Cintāmañi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāṇa Avalokiteśvara respectively. This cave is situated on the north wall of Cave No. 176.

#### **Cave No. 179**

**Period of Construction:** Late and Middle Tang (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows lotus designs in the centre redrawn in Middle Tang. The four slopes are without paintings. The west wall has a preaching scene drawn during Middle Tang and statues of a Buddha and a disciple cast during Qing. The south wall illustrates a preaching scene drawn during High Tang. The north wall shows a preaching scene drawn during Middle Tang. All the above paintings are damaged. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of a meditating Buddha; on both the north and south sides of the entrance is a bodhisattva.

**Cave No. 180**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Middle Tang and Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The centre of the ceiling shows an Usher Buddha. Both the north and south slopes have five sitting Buddhas. Painting of a female donor on the north wall is damaged, just the head remains. All the paintings were drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows camellia flowers in circles; the four slopes have miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings painted during High Tang. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha cast in Tang and five disciples and two celestial animals cast during Qing. The west wall of the interior of the niche features disciples, devakanyās, monks, ratnas, rākṣas, a king and his two ladies. On the south of the niche is Samantabhadra, on its north is Mañjuśrī painted in High Tang. The south wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra drawn during Middle Tang with the twelve great vows on the east side and the nine inauspicious deaths on the west. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru on the east and the sixteen meditations to the west drawn during Middle Tang. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of eight sitting Buddhas; on the south side of the entrance are the portraits of five bodhisattvas and on the north side is an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the south and sixteen meditations to the north; all the paintings were drawn during Middle Tang.

**Cave No. 181**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall is covered by miniature Buddhas. The north and south walls have faded sūtra illustrations. The west wall features a niche inside which are miniature Buddhas on the ceiling and bodhisattvas on the wall. Atop the niche are miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 182**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall contains statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Tang and four statues of disciples cast in Qing. The north, south and east walls are painted with miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 183**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall is painted with the chess-board and floral patterns on the ceiling and bodhisattvas, disciples and landscape on the walls.

**Cave No. 184**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (paintings being redrawn during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the north, south and west slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre. There is a niche on the west wall with paintings of disciples and art designs.

**Cave No. 185**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The north wall features an attending bodhisattva drawn during Western Xia, with male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties below.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has flower clusters in the centre, the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas partially damaged. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples cast in Tang (repaired during Qing) and statues of two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. Inside the niche are paintings of bodhisattvas and disciples. The south wall is covered by miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang with a preaching scene of High Tang in the centre. The north wall illustrates the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra. The west side displays the thirty-three manifestations and the east side a scene of Avalokiteśvara rescuing people from troubles. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of the Nirvāṇa-Sūtra drawn in Middle Tang; on the north and south of the entrance are faded Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively.

**Cave No. 186**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows round petalled lotus in the centre drawn in Middle Tang; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and illustration of the Paradise of Maitreya; the west wall depicts dharma meetings, Buddha stories and scenes of the life of the people. The niche on the west wall has six statues cast in Qing. Two flying figures are painted on the ceiling of the niche with disciples and art designs on its inner walls. The south wall illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra and the north wall illustrates the Lañkāvatāra-Sūtra. A preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties is seen above the entrance of the east wall. Both the south and north sides of the entrance have portraits of a bodhisattva drawn in the Five Dynasties as well as a statue of a standing bodhisattva cast in Qing.

**Cave No. 187**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** On the west wall is a bodhi-ratna canopy with Buddha's disciples. The north and south walls are painted with decorative hangings, bodhisattvas and disciples. On the east wall to the south of the entrance is a bodhisattva.

**Cave No. 188**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has floral patterns drawn in Song. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during Song. To the north of the entrance at a lower level is a painting showing Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the south wall is a bodhisattva painted in Song and revealed on the inner layer are fragments of a painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the north wall the painting drawn in Song is faded; while the inner layer shows a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. The east end is the entrance to Cave No. 189.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a faded painting drawn in Song. The north and south walls have faded paintings drawn in Song while the inner layer of both the walls has paintings drawn in the Five Dynasties which are blurred.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows floral patterns in the centre painted in High Tang; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of Buddha and four disciples cast in Tang and repaired in Qing. Inside the niche are standing Buddhas, attending bodhisattvas and flying figures painted on the ceiling and disciples on the screens of the wall all painted during Tang. Below the niche is a portrait of the donor with inscriptions of the Five Dynasties. The Amitāyur-dhāna-Sūtra is illustrated on the south wall, with Ajātaśatru to its west and sixteen meditations to its east. The north wall has an illustration of the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to its east and sixteen meditations painted to its west in Middle Tang. A preaching scene drawn during Song covers the space above the entrance of the east wall. The ante-room was painted in the Five Dynasties and renovated during Song/Western Xia.

#### **Cave No. 189**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling is blurred. The niche on the north wall houses seven statues cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Three words "Ji xiang fo" (auspicious Buddha) are inscribed atop the niche. The inner layer of the east wall reveals fragmented paintings drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 190**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Yuan).

**Contents:** The niche on the south wall has a three-panel screen with blurred figures of Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The west wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; on the south and north sides are illustrated the twelve great vows and the nine inauspicious deaths respectively. Fragments of adevārāja are in a corner of the north wall.

#### **Cave No. 191**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The ceiling has chess-board and floral designs in the centre; the south slope shows four standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and two bodhisattvas; the west slope has a standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha, the east slope portrays two standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and two bodhisattvas while the Bhaiṣajyaguru and bodhisattva on the north slope have only their heads remaining. The east and west



walls illustrate the Sūtra of the Paradise of Maitreya and the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra respectively; on the north and south sides of the sūtra illustration on the west wall are the twelve great vows and Ajātaśatru respectively. This cave is situated inside the south wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 197.

### **Cave No. 192**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The north and south sides of the entrance on the west wall have devarājas. The south wall shows bodhisattvas (all blurred).

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a blurred painting while the north and south walls feature bodhisattvas all drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Ānanda and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The ceiling and slopes inside the niche have fourteen sitting Buddhas and bodhisattvas painted on the screens of its walls. Both sides of the curtains at the opening of the niche highlight Mañjuśrī along with flying figures, bhikṣus and donors. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrated the Amitābha-Sūtra and the Paradise of Maitreya. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra from west to east. On the south side of the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara; on the north side is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. At the lower portion of these three walls are donors (mostly female) painted in Song.

### **Cave No. 193**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang and Song.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the west and north slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas (both blurred). Both the north and south walls feature a preaching scene drawn in Song. The niche on the west wall has a row of miniature Buddhas painted in Late Tang on all the three walls with additional Song paintings of a preaching scene and bodhisattvas.

### **Cave No. 194**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Late Tang and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is a preaching scene drawn during Late Tang; on the north and south sides of the entrance is a portrait each of devarāja drawn during Late Tang. The south wall has a painting which is blurred. Below this are five male donors. All the above paintings have faded. The north wall features a devarāja, both are drawn during Late Tang. The east is the entrance to Cave No. 195.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene. The south wall shows Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, the north wall features Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, both drawn during Late Tang.

**Main Hall:** The north slope of the ceiling has only the head of a bhikṣu left in the damaged painting. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarāja cast during High Tang. The south wall has fragments of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. At the western end is a damaged painting of King's progression; the lower level shows portraits of sixteen male and female donors drawn during Western Xia. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west and the sixteen meditations to the east. At the lower level are seen six female donors, five male donors drawn during High Tang; four female donors drawn during Western Xia. The lowest level has a sitting Buddha drawn during High Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas (partially damaged); on the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas and Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara respectively.

### Cave No. 195

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the north wall is inscribed an invocation, but the wording is illegible. On the west side of the entrance is the portrait of devarāja drawn during Late Tang which has also faded.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene. The east wall has a damaged painting in a corner.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is damaged in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings, the west, north and south slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene in the centre. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall has chess-board and floral designs in the centre. On the south and north slopes are four images of standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and two attending bodhisattvas; the east and west slopes each have three standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and two attending bodhisattvas. Kṣitigarbha is painted on one of the screens on the north wall inside the niche. The west wall of the cave has a faded depiction of Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra. Above the entrance on the south wall is a faded inscription. On the west side of the entrance is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

### Cave No. 196

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a painting of seven Buddhas, on the north side is the portrait of a female donor; to the north and south of the entrance are figures of Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka respectively; at the lower level are the figures of donors. The ceiling fresco is destroyed with only traces of art designs. A part of the wooden structures of Late Tang is preserved.

**Corridor:** The ceiling features miniature Buddhas in the centre; the north and south slopes each have three preaching scenes. Drawn on the south wall are two male donors and four attendants. On the north wall are the portraits of General Suo Xun and his son along with five attendants.

**Main Hall:** Placed in the central altar are statues, one each of cross-legged sitting Buddha, Kāśyapa, Ānanda, Bodhisattva in ardha padmāsana and devarāja. The screen at the back has an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and a bodhisattva. The caisson ceiling has scenes of Buddha attending meetings, along with bodhisattvas, miniature Buddhas and flying figures. The west wall illustrates the fight

between Sāriputra and Raudrīkā. On the south wall from west to east are illustrated the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, Amitābha-Sūtra, Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra; below is a fifteen-panel screen with a bodhisattva painted on each panel. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrated the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Sūtra of the Paradise of Maitreya; below is a fifteen-panel screen with a bodhisattva painted on each panel. Portraits of bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara and Vajra are featured above the entrance of the east wall. On the south and north sides of the entrance are illustrations of Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively. The cave known as the "Cave of Dharma-Master He" was built in the Jingfu Era (892-3) of Tang.

### Cave No. 197

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling is covered by sūtra illustrations drawn during the Five Dynasties which is damaged. The mural on the west wall is blurred. The top portion of the south wall shows the damaged painting of devarājas; below it are donors drawn in Middle Tang. This wall has the entrance to Cave No. 191.

**Corridor:** The ceiling exhibits a six-armed Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall of the corridor features a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara; portraits of five male donors are seen below. The north wall features Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara below which are seen five male donors. The north and south walls have faded Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The lotus occupies the centre of the caisson ceiling. The four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, a disciple and a bodhisattva. The south wall features Kṣitigarbha and a bodhisattva drawn during Middle Tang. At the lower level are forty-nine miniature Buddhas and figures of two bodhisattvas painted during the Five Dynasties. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west and sixteen meditations to the east. Seen at the lower level is an invocation which has been inscribed. On each of the two sides are a female donor and bhikṣu and three male donors. The western end reveals the figure of a bodhisattva drawn during Song. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of two attending bodhisattvas; on the south and north sides of the entrance are the portraits of Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara respectively; at the bottom is a sitting bodhisattva, all painted during Song.

### Cave No. 198

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene while both on the north and south sides of the entrance on the west wall is a portrait of devarāja all drawn during Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a sitting Buddha painted during Song which has faded. The Song painting of a donor bhikṣu on both north and south walls is also faded.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has round petalled lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows chess-board and floral patterns. Painted on the four slopes of the niche ceiling are eight cross-legged sitting Buddhas,

bodhisattvas and six Aupapādakas. The west wall inside the niche has Bhaiṣajyagurus and bodhisattvas painted on the screen along with peacocks. Twodevarājas are painted on the sides of the curtains at the opening. The south wall illustrates the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra while the north wall, the Paradise of Maitreya. Above the entrance of the east wall is the portrait of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara; to the south and north of the entrance are portraits of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. Below these portraits are illustrations of the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively.

#### **Cave No. 199**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows fragments of patterns drawn in Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The corridor ceiling features an Usher Buddha which is damaged.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has floral designs drawn in High Tang; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Tang. The niche has another statue of a sitting Buddha shifted here from elsewhere during Western Xia. High Tang paintings of fifteen Bhaiṣajyagurus and six bodhisattvas (damaged) with art designs are painted on the ceiling and its slopes. Portraits of Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, donor bhikṣu drawn during Middle Tang are in the centre of the south wall. The east side of the wall shows six miniature Buddhas, eight bodhisattvas in lotus pond, seven sitting Buddhas painted during Middle Tang; the west side shows two portraits of Avalokiteśvara and one female donor also from Middle Tang. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the east and the sixteen meditations to the west. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas, a meditating Buddha in the centre, on the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of miniature Buddhas. All these were drawn in Middle Tang. Portraits of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha at the lower level of the miniature Buddhas on the south side and a bodhisattva and devarāja seen below the miniature Buddhas on the north side.

#### **Cave No. 200**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows three rabbits (joining as one) and round petalled lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Inside the niche there are eighteen Bhaiṣajyagurus with eighteen bodhisattvas painted on the slopes of the ceiling with Buddhist practices and Karma lessons on the walls. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra with the sixteen meditations on its east side. Below this sputra illustration is a four-panel screen showing Ajātaśatru, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness. On its east side and below it is a two-panel screen showing the chapter on filial piety. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrated the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, to its west and below it is drawn a three-panel screen showing nine inauspicious deaths; Maitreya Sūtra with the illustration of Maitreyavyakarana on its west side, below this illustration is a three-panel screen narrating scenes of marriage, cultivation and bumper harvest and Maitreya returning to the city. Above the entrance of the east wall is inscribed an invocation. On the south and north sides of the entrance are portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara respectively.

#### **Cave No. 201**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has half of the remains of a portrait of Avalokiteśvara drawn during Song; painted on the south slope are six sitting Buddhas, while the north slope features five sitting Buddhas both drawn during Song. The north and south walls have faded pictures of Avalokiteśvara respectively (one with eleven-heads) both drawn during Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows a bodhi-ratna canopy, clouds and two flying figures. The middle portion of the north and south walls illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations on the two sides. The east and west ends of the north wall have Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbhas respectively. The east and the west ends of the south wall feature Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbhas respectively. At the lower level are the donors drawn during Song. Above the entrance of the east wall are three preaching scenes. On the south and north sides of the entrance are paintings of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively both drawn during Song.

#### Cave No. 202

**Period of Construction:** Early and Middle Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The space above the entrance on the west wall is covered by portraits of seven Buddhas; an invocation is inscribed above these Buddha figures. On either side is Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. On each of the north and south sides is the figure of a devarāja. The north and south walls illustrate the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra with Mañjuśrī on the south and Vimalakīrti on the north both drawn during Song.

**Corridor:** The corridor ceiling has Kṣitigarbha and the ten kings of hell in the centre. Both the north and south slopes display four standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and a bodhisattva. The north and south walls both exhibit sitting Buddhas and a donor drawn during Song.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows a round petalled lotus in the centre; the four slopes have decorative hangings and twelve celestial musicians hovering around, miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre drawn during Song. The niche on the west wall has statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and Vajra warriors cast in Early Tang. Inside the niche there is a depiction of Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra painted in Early Tang with Early and Middle Tang paintings of disciples, bodhisattvas on its west wall. Outside there is Mañjuśrī with a devarāja on the south and Samantabhadra and a devarāja on the north. The south wall illustrates the Paradise of Maitreya drawn during Middle Tang. Below it is an inscribed invocation. On either side are heavenly musicians, further below are fourteen attending bodhisattvas painted in Song. There is a painting of a five-hundred year old woman getting married on the right corner. The north wall features Buddhas of ten directions attending a meeting; a ratna-pool with two celestial musicians on the sides. At the lower level are seen thirteen attending bodhisattvas drawn during Song. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene drawn in Early Tang. On its south is illustrated the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and on its north, the Amitābha-Sūtra, both painted during Middle Tang. To the south of the entrance is the portrait of Virūdhaka drawn in Middle Tang, below this portrait are the figures of five attending bodhisattvas drawn during Song. To the north of the entrance is the portrait of Vaiśravaṇa and below it are the figures of four attending bodhisattvas drawn during Song.

#### Cave No. 203

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the doorway of the west wall is inscribed an invocation which had been rewritten during Song. On both sides are scenes of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. To the north and south of the entrance illustrations of Vimalakīrti Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively drawn during Song.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling has a painting drawn in Song. Both the north and south slopes have five sitting Buddhas. The north and south walls feature a female and a male donor respectively drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has the lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has statues of standing Buddha leaning on a mountain and two bodhisattvas carved during Early Tang. On both sides of the Vīra platform at a lower level are two lions each and on the platform are the statues of two Vīras cast in Song. The north and south walls have preaching scenes with miniature Buddhas and flying figures on either side. Above the entrance on the east wall are four rows of miniature Buddhas, a set of seven Buddhas and offering of vessels drawn in Song. On the south and north sides of the entrance are two devarājas drawn in Early Tang, a bodhisattva and a male donor drawn during Song.

#### **Cave No. 204**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Song and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Paintings of the Five Dynasties around the entrance on the west wall are damaged. To the north is a scene of Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows four flying figures and lotus designs, the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples, four bodhisattvas. There are miniature Buddhas painted on the south and north walls with the preaching scene in the centre. Above the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 205**

**Period of Construction:** Early and High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has a portrait of Mañjuśrī with thousand hands and bowls in each hand drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south and north sides feature portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. Above the entrance on the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties; on either side is a bodhisattva. On the south side of the entrance is illustrated the Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara Sūtrahaving Ajātaśatru on its north side and the sixteen meditations on its south side. To the north of the entrance is illustrated the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with nine inauspicious deaths to its south and the twelve great vows to its north. The south wall features the Devatā-Sūtra and the north wall features a partial sūtra illustration.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows Peacock King. On the slopes are decorative hangings. The south wall shows donor Cao Yijin and his attendants while the north displays the Uighur Princess Madam Li (Cao's wife) and her female attendants, all figures have faded. These paintings were drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Placed on the central altar are statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang and two statues of devarājas cast in Middle Tang. The ceiling has the three rabbits (joining as one) designs drawn in Early Tang; on the four slopes are the miniature Buddhas painted during Early Tang. The west wall features the Paradise of Maitreya drawn in Middle Tang; there are twenty-four male donors at the lower level. On the south side is a portrait of Mañjuśrī drawn in Middle Tang; below this are portraits of Avalokiteśvara, a female donor and an attendant drawn in High Tang. The north side has a portrait of Samantabhadra drawn in Middle Tang; figures of Avalokiteśvara, a female donor and an attendant from High Tang are painted below. From east to west on the south wall is a preaching scene drawn during High Tang, an illustration of the Amitābha-Sūtrapainted during High Tang; the portraits of Bhaiṣajyaguru, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha are shown below. The north wall illustrates from west to east the Amitābha-Sūtra drawn in Early Tang. Below it is a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties showing nine bottle-shaped doors inside which are celestial musicians and precious offerings; a preaching scene on G<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>dhrakṣuta drawn during Early Tang. Below this scene is a painting of four bottle-shaped doors inside which are celestial musicians and precious offerings drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Buddhas from ten directions attending a sermon, drawn during the Five Dynasties. On the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of Cao family members and attendants drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### Cave No. 206

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty (renovated during Early Tang, the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is a portrait of a meditating monk.

**Corridor:** On the ceiling are fragments of sūtra illustrations drawn in the Five Dynasties renovated in Western Xia. On the south wall is the painting of the Five Dynasties of the Samantabhadra-Sūtra.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has lotus and dharma cudgel designs drawn during Western Xia. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui. Outside the niche on the two sides are statues of two warriors chiselled in Early Tang. Inside the niche flaming Amitābha on the ceiling and four disciples on each of the north and south walls drawn in Sui and coloured in Western Xia. Below the niche there are Mañjuśrī and an attending bodhisattva painted in Western Xia on the surface layer covering Sui paintings on the inner layer. On the south of the niche on top is Mañjuśrī and on its north Vimalakīrti painted in Sui to depict the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra along with bodhisattvas below them coloured in Western Xia. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui and painted during Western Xia with a preaching scene in the centre; below is a portrait of a bodhisattva (blurred) drawn in Western Xia. Above the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui and painted during Western Xia. On the north and south sides of the entrance are standing Buddhas drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### Cave No. 207

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang. Outside the niche are drawn net hangings on top with bodhisattvas below on both northern and southern sides. The north and the south walls have net hangings drawn at

the top and a preaching scene at the bottom. Above the entrance on the east wall only three of Buddhas remain out of the seven originally painted. On the south side of the entrance is Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha.

### Cave No. 208

**Period of Construction:** Tang.

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has a mural showing seven Buddhas drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties. On either side are scenes of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. The south side of the entrance illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra; the north side illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra, both were drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north and the south walls of the ante-room show a devarāja each.

**Corridor:** The ceiling exhibits the Peacock King in the centre drawn during the Five Dynasties; the north and south slopes are painted with four sitting Buddhas each.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes show decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has the depiction of the Stūpa sandarsana parivartana of Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra and six flying figures on the ceiling with a halo in the centre on the west flanked by two disciples and further flanked by a bodhisattva, three disciples on the north and south walls. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west and the sixteen meditations to the east. The north wall features the Sūtra of the Paradise of Maitreya. Above the entrance of the east wall are painted miniature Buddhas; on the north and south sides of the entrance are two bodhisattvas each.

### Cave No. 209

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The original painting on the ceiling was of miniature Buddhas, but now the entire painting has peeled off. Above the entrance on the west wall are the donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The north and south walls show damaged paintings drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The central altar contains statues of three officials of hell cast in Qing. On the caisson ceiling are paintings of Prince Siddhartha's birth and departure from his palace with preaching scenes on the northern and southern slopes. On the west wall there are depictions of Buddhist stories on both sides of the halo. Below the altar on the west wall are four bodhisattvas and nine donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall illustrates the scene of Maitreya preaching the dharma; ten bodhisattvas are seen below; on the west end is a narrative painting. The north wall has a preaching scene with ten bodhisattvas below; the west end shows a narrative painting. Above the entrance of the east wall are three preaching scenes along with other figures.

### Cave No. 210

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows a cross-legged sitting Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall shows traces of bhikṣu drawn in the Five Dynasties.



**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has miniature Buddhas on the north and south slopes; the top portion of the west wall is covered with miniature Buddhas. The east wall has miniature Buddhas in one corner and a donor. The south wall features miniature Buddhas. This cave is south-facing.

#### **Cave No. 211**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (the statues redecorated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows four-petalled flowers in the centre; the four slopes are painted with the miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. Partial damage of the paintings on the eastern slope. The niche on the west wall shelters a set of three statues of Xuan Zang cast in Qing. The north and south walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of seven Buddhas; to the north and south of the entrance is an Usher Buddha.

#### **Cave No. 212**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Middle Tang and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** To the south at the lower level of the entrance on the west wall is inscribed an invocation. Miniature Buddhas were sculptured on the upper layer on this wall which are destroyed.

**Main Hall:** The west wall shows a preaching scene and shelters statues of Buddha and two disciples. The west end of the south wall reveals a portrait of a bodhisattva and five miniature Buddhas. Below are the figures of twelve donors. The north wall features a disciple, a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa, a bodhisattva and three cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. At the lower level are eight male donors.

#### **Cave No. 213**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling is faded. Traces of miniature Buddhas can be seen on the four slopes. The west, south and east walls have a painting each of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The lower portion shows traces of miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 214**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the stucco statues are sculptured during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The north side of the west wall displays a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara at the lower level.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has the designs of clouds and flowers painted in the centre, the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters a set of three Buddha statues cast in Qing. The south wall features the Sūtra for Bhaiṣajyaguru, and the north wall portrays a preaching scene. The eastern corner of both the south and north walls is damaged. A hole was bored. The east wall has fragments of a bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 215**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (the statues being repaired during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west and south walls have impressions of Buddha and two bodhisattva statues which are damaged.

**Main Hall:** There is a floral design in the centre of the caisson ceiling, the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru on the east and the sixteen meditations on the west side, nine categories of Rebirth in Heaven; at a lower level are the portraits of five female donors. The south wall illustrates the Sūtra for the Paradise of Maitreya with a row of male donors below. Above the entrance of the east wall are painted seven Buddha images; on both the north and south sides of the entrance is a bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 216**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows cloud patterns and floral designs in the centre with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas on the four slopes. The west wall has an open altar on top of which is a painting of the Trinity preaching. Outside the altar are painted an Avalokiteśvara and another bodhisattva attended by soldiers of hell. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall and on the north and south of the entrance are the preaching scenes.

#### **Cave No. 217**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Late Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows a painting drawn during Late Tang. Above the entrance on the west wall are painted offerings of vessels and donors drawn during High Tang. On the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of devarājas drawn during Late Tang. The south wall features the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and the north wall features the Samantabhadra-Sūtra, drawn during Late Tang of which only a portion is now extant.

**Corridor:** The north and south slopes of the corridor ceiling show portraits of Kṣitigarbha and his ten hell kings lined up on both slopes drawn during Late Tang. The north and south walls have two donors each.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Tang. An illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra adorns the south wall. The north wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west; a portrait of Ajātaśatru with the sixteen meditations on the east side can be seen below. The east wall illustrates the chapter on Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 218**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of *devarāja* and a bodhisattva cast during the Five Dynasties, repaired during Qing. Inside the niche there is Maitreya preaching on the ceiling with eleven bodhisattvas on its walls. Outside the niche there is a faded Middle Tang sitting bodhisattva on its south and Western Xia bodhisattva on its north. The south wall illustrates the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra* with *Ajātaśatru* to the west and the sixteen meditations to the east. The north wall features *Sūtra* of the the Paradise of Maitreya. Inscribed below is an invocation with two celestial musicians on the two sides of the inscription. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of seven Buddhas out of which only five are visible; also seen are four bodhisattvas and four donors. On the south of the entrance is the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha*, on the north is a preaching scene drawn during Western Xia.

#### Cave No. 219

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the north and west slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The miniature Buddhas on the four slopes are either faded or damaged. Paintings inside the niche on the west wall are also impaired featuring bodhisattvas, *Nirmāṇabuddha*, disciples and *Nirmāṇabuddha*. The north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas (blurred). The cave was damaged at the time when Cave No. 100 was hewn.

#### Cave No. 220

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Middle Tang, Late Tang, the Five Dynasties, Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A damaged portrait of *devarāja* painted during Song is above the entrance of the west wall. The lower portion is Cave No. 221. A special feature is a niche on the inner surface inside which are Middle Tang paintings of Buddhas and bodhisattvas on all walls. Atop the niche are fragments of three Buddhas in relief, a sitting Buddha and Middle Tang paintings of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas on his sides. Beneath the niche is a Late Tang painting of a standing Buddha. The inner layer on the north wall has paintings of *Mañjuśrī* and *Avalokiteśvara* painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has the portrait of four-armed *Avalokiteśvara* in the centre drawn during Song; the north and south slopes have six sitting Buddhas each.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows round petalled lotus and coiled dragon designs drawn during Song. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Tang and repaired during Qing. The ceiling of the niche shows a preaching scene and six flying figures. The south wall illustrates the *Amitābha-Sūtra* drawn in Early Tang. The *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra* adorns the north wall. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are three preaching Buddhas, a male and a female donor. To the south and north of the entrance are portraits of *Vimalakīrti* and *Mañjuśrī* respectively from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* drawn in Early Tang.

#### Cave No. 221

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling and the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas. The west wall features a preaching scene; the north and south walls illustrate the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and Mañjuśrī-Sūtra respectively.

**Cave No. 222**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (the statues being cast in Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows a sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with Buddha sitting in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains two statues of Taoist gods and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. Inside the niche there are twelve Bhaiṣajyas on the ceiling slopes. The map of Mount Wutai painted on both the north and south sides of the curtains at the opening of the niche has faded. The south wall illustrates the Sūtra of the Paradise of Maitreya, on the west side of the illustration is the Maitreyavya-karana; the north wall features the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, the west side shows the nine inauspicious deaths. Above the entrance to the eastern wall is inscribed an invocation which is obscure. On the north and south sides of the entrance are illustrated the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively.

**Cave No. 223**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling is painted with flower clusters, two slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls have faded pictures of bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has coiled dragon designs in relief in the centre, with circular lines and floral motifs and chess-board patterns on the four slopes. Inside the niche on the west wall are nine Buddha statues, cast in Qing. The niche on the south wall has a damaged statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Tang. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall has fragments of floral designs and a bodhi tree. A preaching scene is shown above the entrance of the east wall, the north and south sides of the entrance illustrate the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively with their lower parts gone blurred.

**Cave No. 224**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre, the four slopes are painted with circular lines and floral motifs. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, a devarāja, Ānanda cast in Late Tang and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra and the north wall the Sukhāvati-Sūtra. Painted above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene with the middle portion damaged. The north and south sides of the entrance have a portrait each of a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva.

**Cave No. 225**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Middle Tang and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Nine of the miniature Buddhas remain on the ceiling. Above the entrance on the west wall are featured portraits of eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south side of the entrance is the entrance to Cave No. 227. Between it and the entrance of the corridor of Cave No. 225 are fragments of lokapālas. The north side of the entrance is the entrance to Cave No. 226. Between it and the entrance of the corridor of Cave No. 225 are fragments of devarājas. The north and south walls both have Indra drawn in the Five Dynasties (damaged).

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling has an Usher Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south slope shows six cross-legged sitting Buddhas and the north slope five sitting Buddhas, both drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls have faded donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre, the four slopes are painted with floral motifs, garlands and hanging curtains and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and a bodhisattva cast in High Tang and repaired during Qing. Outside the niche on the east is Kṣitigarbha on the east and Avalokiteśvara on the west painted in Middle Tang. The niche on the north wall houses the statue of Nirvāṇa Buddha, nineteen disciples and celestial beings behind the Buddha. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are the donor figures drawn during Middle Tang and six hundred and ten miniature Buddhas; on the north and south sides of the entrance are the pictures of Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south side also shows portraits of Kṣitigarbha, bodhisattva, and sitting Buddha.

#### **Cave No. 226**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** Camellia flowers in circles can be seen in the centre of the ceiling; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha which has been shifted here from elsewhere. The north and south walls both feature a preaching scene painted in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 227**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows two floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas, with a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains four damaged statues of cross-legged sitting Buddhas cast in Song shifted from elsewhere. The miniature Buddhas on the ceiling of the niche are blackened by smoke, on its inner walls are bodhisattvas painted on screens. Outside it on the south there are three sitting Buddhas and a depiction of Samantabhadra's feat, while on the north, Mañjuśrī in addition to the three sitting Buddhas. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra. Below is a row of donors (blurred) drawn during Late Tang. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall and on the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 228**

**Period of Construction:** Qing Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling is damaged; only a damaged statue of devarāja cast during Qing remains.

**Cave No. 229**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The north and south walls have each a donor bhikṣu.

**Main Hall:** The west wall has three clay statues without paint along with a fresco of miniature Buddhas. The south wall is covered by miniature Buddhas drawn during Late Tang. The north wall, too, has a miniature Buddha fresco.

**Cave No. 230**

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows dragon designs in relief in the centre. The west, south and east slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall has statues of two disciples, one bodhisattva and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Inside the niche there are twelve sitting Buddhas on the slopes of the ceiling, with faded story paintings on its walls. At the opening of the niche there is Samantabhadra on the south of the curtains and Mañjuśrī on their north. The south wall features two scenes from the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra; at a lower level are seven bodhisattvas. The north wall also has two scenes from the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall are the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and two bodhisattvas.

**Cave No. 231**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* The ceiling shows a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn in Song, on the south and north sides are Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara both partially damaged. The west wall has two Avalokiteśvara on Mount Patalaka drawn in Song. On the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of sūtras drawn in Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn in Middle Tang. The north and south walls have portraits of Cao Yuanzhong and his wife (both faded) drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows a lion and round petalled lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs, decorative hangings, celestial musicians hovering all over and miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and a disciple cast in Tang and statue of a disciple carved in Qing along with a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. On the south wall west-eastwards are illustrated the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra, below which is a four-panel screen showing Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra below which is a four-panel screen painted with the chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara and the Devatā-Sūtra, with a four-panel screen below illustrating the Brahma-Sūtra. On the north wall west-eastwards is an illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, with a four-panel screen below painted with the nine forms of inauspicious death and the twelve great vows and

the Avatamsaka-Sūtra with a four-panel screen below it, and also the Paradise of Maitreya with a four-panel screen below it showing scenes of marriage ceremony, bumper harvest and Maitreya's returning to the city. Above the entrance on the east wall are the donor portraits of the parents of Yin Chu; the south side of the entrance on the east wall illustrates the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness. The north side illustrates the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra.

### **Cave No. 232**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The east, south and north slopes of the ceiling have fragments of miniature Buddhas. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has the chess-board and floral designs. Seventeen sitting Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and seven attending bodhisattvas are painted on its four slopes. On its walls are paintings highlighting the twelve great vows, the nine inauspicious deaths and also Bhaiṣajyaguru. On the south of the curtains at its openings is Samantabhadra, while on the north Mañjuśrī, both below three sitting Buddhas. On the south wall from west to east are illustrated the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra and the Avatamsaka-Sūtra; below the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra is a four-panel screen showing Ajātaśatru and sixteen meditations while the four-panel screen below the Avatamsaka-Sūtra illustrates various chapters of the Sūtra. On the north wall from west to east is illustrated the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra with a single-panel screen below it showing the twelve great vows and Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra below which is a screen. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara; on the north and south sides of the entrance are Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara respectively.

### **Cave No. 233**

**Period of Construction:** Song (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling is painted with floral motifs (the colour has changed into blackish grey). Above the entrance on the west wall is a preaching scene and to the north of the entrance are sūtra illustrations, both are faded.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings and flying figures. The north and south walls feature seven and ten alms-offering bodhisattvas respectively.

**Main Hall:** An image of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast during Song is seen on the main altar along with statues of Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, two disciples, six bodhisattvas and four warriors (all repaired in Qing). To the east of the altar at the lower level is the extant Qing painting of a donor. The north, south and west walls are painted with miniature Buddhas. Buddha figures on lotus are painted above the entrance of the east wall. Miniature Buddhas are seen on the north and south sides of the entrance.

### **Cave No. 234**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows floral patterns. An illustration of the Sukhāvātī Sūtra is seen above the entrance of the west wall, to the south of the entrance is illustrated the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and on the north side is the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs. The south wall has alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia; the inner layer reveals a part of a Middle Tang painting of devarājas.

**Main Hall:** There is a set of three standing Buddhas on the central altar of the main hall. The centre of the ceiling shows the five dragon designs; the four slopes have the chess-board and floral patterns. The west wall shows decorative hangings and at the lower level is the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, the south wall is also covered by the decorative hangings and at the lower level is the illustration of the Amitābha Sūtra. The north wall has the same features as the south wall. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene; on the south side of the entrance is a damaged figure of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara while on the north side is the portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

### Cave No. 235

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.

**Contents:** Adorning the west wall is a painting of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara (the upper portion is damaged due to smoke). Both the north and south walls illustrate Avalokiteśvara Sūtra (the top portion damaged due to fumigation). To the north and south of the entrance on the east wall is a donor bhikṣu.

### Cave No. 236

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows a cross-legged sitting Avalokiteśvara drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Sheltered in the niche of the west wall are three statues carved during Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The ceiling of the niche has the chess-board and floral designs. The west slope is covered by eight auspicious figures, a bodhisattva and a bhikṣu. The south slope shows five auspicious figures and the north shows three figures; the east slope has eight auspicious figures. From west to east on the south wall are illustrated the Amitāyus-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru on the east and the sixteen meditations on the west; Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrated the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with the twelve great vows on the east and the nine inauspicious deaths on the west and the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra. On the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti respectively.

### Cave No. 237

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows coiled dragons, chess-board and floral designs drawn during Western Xia. Above the entrance on the west wall are the portraits of Indra, two devakanyās and a devarāja, while the north and south sides show "Water and Moon" Avalokiteśvara. A painting on the



north side of the entrance drawn during Western Xia has peeled off revealing the severely damaged devarājas painted in Middle Tang.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral patterns. The south wall features male donors and attendants drawn in Western Xia while the north wall features two female donors also drawn in Western Xia. All are faded or severely damaged.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and round petalled lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by the decorative hangings and the miniature Buddhas with a ratna-stūpa in the centre. The niche contains five statues and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. On the south wall west-eastwards is an illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, below it is a four-panel screen with the scene of Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara; the Amitāyus-Sūtra, with a four-panel screen below showing Ajātaśatru on two panels and sixteen meditations on the other two; there is the Paradise of Maitreya with a four-panel screen below it depicting scenes of bumper harvest, marriage ceremony and Maitreya's birth. The north wall illustrates the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, below it is a four-panel screen with the paintings of the various chapters from the Avatamsaka-Sūtra; there is the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with the four-panel screen below it depicting the nine inauspicious deaths and the twelve great vows; there is the Devatā-Sūtra with a four-panel screen below it illustrating the Brahma-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of the Chapter of Buddhhaloka from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. Both sides of the entrance depict the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra with Vimalakīrti on the south and Mañjuśrī on the north. Below them on each side is a four-panel screen illustrating the Chapter on Upāyakauśalya.

#### Cave No. 238

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. Above the entrance of the west wall are decorative hangings and an invocation. On both the north and south of the entrance is a devarāja drawn during Middle Tang.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a four-armed Avalokiteśvara. Faded portraits of Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī painted in Middle Tang are on the south and north walls respectively.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons and floral designs in the centre. Decorative hangings along with miniature Buddhas can be seen on the four slopes and these are damaged due to fumigation. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows chess-board patterns with floral designs. The east and west walls of the niche have each a set of five standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas along with two bodhisattvas. Similarly each of the north and south walls of the niche has a set of three standing Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and two bodhisattvas. On the south wall west-eastwards is illustrated the Amitāyus-Sūtra, the upper portion is damaged because of fumigation and below is a three-panel screen having drawings of the sixteen meditations, Ajātaśatru; an illustration of Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness (damaged by smoke) below which is a three-panel screen showing the Chapter on Evil Friends (blurred). On the north wall from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with a three-panel screen below it having twelve great vows painted on it; the Maitreya-Sūtra with a three-panel screen below showing scenes of rich harvest, marriage ceremony and birth (blurred). Above the entrance on the east wall are the donor figures damaged by fumigation; to the south is illustrated the Sūtra of filial

piety, at the lower level is a three-panel screen; to the north of the entrance is a sūtra illustration and a screen.

**Cave No. 239**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The upper portion of the west wall is partially painted with decorative hangings.

**Cave No. 240**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The west and south slopes of the ceiling are covered by miniature Buddhas (partial). The north side of the caisson ceiling shows the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged Buddha sitting in the centre. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Middle Tang. On the south wall west-eastwards are illustrated the Amitāyus-Sūtra, a three-panel screen below this illustration showing the sixteen meditations; Devatā-Sūtra below which is a three-panel screen. On the north wall from west to east are the illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, below it a three-panel screen showing the twelve great vows and nine inauspicious deaths; Vajracchedikā-Sūtra with a screen at the lower level.

**Cave No. 241**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows lions and floral designs; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings; below these are miniature Buddhas. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall exhibits lions and floral designs, the north, west and south slopes are partially painted with decorative hangings below which are the miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 242**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows round petalled lotus designs drawn in Song; floral motifs, decorative hangings and flying figures hovering all over cover the four slopes. The north, south and west slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two disciples cast in Tang. The lower layer of the south wall shows sūtra illustrations drawn during Early Tang.

**Cave No. 243**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling shows round petalled lotus designs. Circular lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings cover the four slopes. A scene of Buddha attending the sermon is portrayed on the east and west sides. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, three bodhisattvas cast in Sui and a statue of a bodhisattva cast in Qing. A sūtra illustration adorns the south

wall while the north wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra. To the north of the entrance of the east wall is Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 244**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has floral designs drawn during Western Xia. Above the entrance of the west wall and to the north and south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas drawn during Western Xia. On the south side at a lower level is the scene of Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha drawn during the Five Dynasties. Miniature Buddhas cover the north and south walls, both painted during Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling has floral designs drawn in Western Xia. The north and south walls of the corridor feature both a donor and attendants drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** On the caisson ceiling we can see a cross-shaped beam and parts of other wooden structures left by Sui; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. On the west wall are the statues of a cross-legged preaching Buddha, Kāśyapa, Ānanda and two bodhisattvas carved during Sui. The wall also features eight flying figures, celestial mansions, railing and walls. On the south wall there is a standing Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas, being statues cast in Sui. Twelve flying figures with a glimpse of the paradise in addition to eight preaching scenes are painted on the wall. The north wall paintings are identical while the standing statue is Maitreya also carved in Sui. The east wall depicts nine flying figures drawn during Sui, celestial mansions and five cross-legged sitting Buddhas. Above the entrance is a preaching scene drawn during the Five Dynasties, a standing Buddha and a male donor drawn during Western Xia. On the north and south sides are two preaching scenes each drawn during Sui and two attending bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia.

#### **Cave No. 245**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling has floral patterns in the centre, the north and south slopes are painted with clouds and floral motifs. On both the north and south walls is a damaged figure of an attending bodhisattva.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons in the centre with the four slopes having floral designs. The niche on the west wall shelters a sitting Buddha statue and a Vajra Buddha throne. Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas are painted on the walls north and south of the niche. Preaching scenes are illustrated on the north and south walls. A blurred image of a donor is visible at the west end of the south wall. The lower layer of the north wall shows four female donors. Above the entrance of the east wall are the portraits of Vipāśyin and five Buddhas, on the north and south sides of the entrance are the figures of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī respectively.

#### **Cave No. 246**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows blurred chess-board patterns. Above the entrance on the west wall is a preaching scene. On the south side of the entrance is an illustration of Mañjuśrī-Sūtra (blurred). Both the north and south walls have fragments of painting drawn during Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral patterns. The north and south slopes have decorative hangings. The north and south walls each feature three attending bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche on the central column shelters statues of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna along with two attending bodhisattvas. Paintings of halo and bodhi tree are seen inside the niche on the west wall while there are bodhisattva figures on the north and south walls. The niche on the central column facing south features two meditating Buddhas, that facing west features two sitting Buddhas while that facing north features two meditating Buddhas. They are all accompanied by attending bodhisattvas. The ceiling of the cave is entirely covered by floral designs. The west wall of the cave is covered by decorative hangings; below these are miniature Buddhas. A preaching scene is below the front portion of the slopes of the north and south walls. The top portion of the east wall is covered by decorative hangings while the lower portion is painted with miniature Buddhas.

#### Cave No. 247

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei.

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling shows a blurred painting of six lotus flowers. The niche on the west wall houses a statue of meditating Buddha, the north and south walls have decorative hangings on top with miniature Buddhas at the bottom (partly damaged). The north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are covered by miniature Buddhas.

#### Cave No. 248

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The north and south slopes have three cross-legged sitting Buddhas which are damaged. The north wall shows female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The central column of the main hall has an east-facing niche which shelters a cross-legged sitting Buddha, outside the niche on either side are bodhisattvas. The south-facing niche on the column features a statue of meditating Buddha with two statues of bodhisattva. The niche which faces west features a statue of Buddha practising ascetic while that facing north features meditating Buddha, all with attending bodhisattvas. The beam of the last niche has mañi-ratna carved in relief. In the front of the ceiling of the cave there are eleven celestial citizens on both the east and west slopes. The beam of the niche features a carved dragon head. The west wall shows ten celestial musicians at the top with miniature Buddhas in the centre and four yakṣas at the bottom. The south wall shows sixteen celestial musicians at the top, the front of the middle portion shows a preaching scene while the rear shows miniature Buddhas, the bottom portion has a row of five yakṣas. The north wall has seventeen musicians at the top, the rest of the wall has the same features as the south wall. The east wall has twelve musicians on the top layer, the miniature Buddhas cover the centre portion; on the south side of the entrance on the east wall are the figures of yakṣas.

#### Cave No. 249

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei (the stucco statues being redecorated in Qing).

**Contents: Main Hall:** Like Cave No. 285 created in the same period, the caisson ceiling here features strange eclectic figures very similar to those of Cave No. 285. On the west slope there is a four-armed figure in the centre who stands in the sea and holds up Mount Sumeru and the Paradise (with an open gate). The theme of the Nāga churning the sea seems also present in the picture. This figure is identified by the Dunhuang Academy as an Asura which needs to be reconsidered. On the east slope two figures are holding a strange lotus plant which seems to symbolize Dharmaratna. There is a celestial figure riding a chariot on both the north and south slopes (partially damaged on the north slope) who have been identified as Xiwangmu and Dongwanggong of the Chinese legend (the latter identified as Indra and the former his mistress). Other strange figures are similar to those shown on the caisson ceiling of Cave No. 285. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two bodhisattvas. Outside the niche to its north and south are two statues of Buddha and bodhisattva. The south wall features nineteen celestial musicians at the top, the middle portion is covered by the miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The figures of Aupapādakas, an alms-offering celestial being and a statue of a bodhisattva are shown at the western end; below them are the figures of a bhikṣu and a donor. Further below is a row of yakṣas. The top portion of the north wall shows twenty celestial musicians, the middle portion is painted with the miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene in the centre. The western end exposes portraits of three Aupapādakas, a celestial being and statue of a bodhisattva repaired during Qing. The lower level shows a row of male donors, eight bhikṣus and twelve Upāsakas; at even lower level is seen a row of seven yakṣas. The top layer of the east wall shows two celestial musicians.

#### **Cave No. 250**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows six flying figures and a sūtra illustration in a corner. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha, Kāśyapa and Vīra. Inside the altar there are Buddha disciples, flying figures, a deer-head brahmacārin, and Vasubandhu. Outside the niche on the two sides are two bodhisattva statues. The north wall has remains of miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 251**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The east-facing niche on the central column contains a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha redecorated in Qing; outside the niche are bodhisattva statues, one on each side. The south side of the column contains a niche with the statue of a cross-ankled bodhisattva on the top layer. The west-facing niche shows the statue of a meditating Buddha, the beam of the niche shows a carved dragon head. The north side of the column contains a niche which has a statue of cross-ankled bodhisattva. Seen on the upper portion of the west wall are the figures of seventeen celestial musicians and cross-legged sitting Buddha; in the middle portion are miniature Buddhas while at the lower level are twelve yakṣas. The upper portion of the south wall exhibits the figures of twenty-three heavenly musicians; the middle portion features a preaching scene, the rear portion shows miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; at the lower level are fourteen yakṣas. There are twenty-six heavenly musicians painted on the north wall while the middle and lower portion having similar paintings as the south wall. Above the entrance on the east wall is a ventilator with fourteen celestial musicians on both sides; to the north of the entrance are miniature Buddhas (partially damaged).

#### **Cave No. 252**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling shows coiled dragon and lotus designs. Each of the four slopes has a preaching scene. The niche on the west wall shelters a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne without statue. The north and south walls feature an illustration of the *Sukhāvati-Sūtra* (partially damaged). Portraits of three cross-legged sitting Buddhas cover the space above the entrance of the east wall. On the north and south sides of the entrance are fragments of damaged paintings.

**Cave No. 253**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and a bodhisattva. The bodhisattva statue on the south side is lost.

**Cave No. 254**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated in Sui).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The north wall of the corridor has a preaching scene.

**Main Hall:** The east, north and south-facing niches on the central column contain a cross-ankled sitting Buddha statue each. The Buddha statue in the north-facing niche is flanked by an attending bodhisattva statue on both sides. The west-facing niche contains a statue of a meditating bodhisattva. Outside the niche, on the west side are twenty-two bodhisattva statues. The north-facing niche also features a cross-legged sitting Buddha. The west wall has eighteen heavenly musicians at the top and miniature Buddhas in the middle; white-robed Buddha inside a niche forms the central painting of the miniature Buddhas; below this is a border design, at the lower level are the figures of seventeen yakias. The niche on the south wall contains the statue of a cross-ankled sitting Maitreya bodhisattva with two snakes hanging on his chest. The north wall features the same paintings as the south wall. Above the entrance of the east wall there is a window. On the window is painted lotus design which is blackened by fumigation. To the north of the entrance, on the top portion are celestial musicians, miniature Buddhas are seen in the middle portion and the lower portion shows Vajra warriors.

**Cave No. 255**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The four slopes of the ceiling and the north and south walls are decorated with miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shows flame designs on its lintel; outside the niche on the north and south sides are a flying figure and a bodhisattva each. Remnants of damaged miniature Buddhas are on the north and south walls.

**Cave No. 256**

**Period of Construction:** Song (the statues being redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* The south side of the entrance on the west wall has a faded illustration of the *Mañjuśrī-Sūtra*, the north side of the entrance has a faded illustration of *Samantabhadra-Sūtra*.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral patterns in the centre; the north and south slopes are painted with decorative hangings. There are eight bodhisattvas on the south wall and five bodhisattvas on the north wall.

**Main Hall:** The central altar contains the statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Song and statues of two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north, south and west walls display miniature Buddhas, some are either faded or damaged. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas on lotus, to the south and north of the entrance are also miniature Buddhas; at the lower level are male and female donors.

### Cave No. 257

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The east-facing niche of the central column contains a statue of the sitting-preaching Buddha. The niche has a carved dragon head on the beam. Outside the niche, to the north is a devarāja statue. Drawn on the walls of the niche are figures of Aupapādakas and halo; ten bodhisattvas and two flying figures can be seen on each of the two sides. The south-facing upper niche on the central column features a "thinking" bodhisattva statue, while in the lower niche the ascetic-practising Buddha statue is damaged (headless). The north-facing niche on the column features a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha while that facing west features a meditating Buddha statue. The top portion of the west wall shows sixteen heavenly musicians, the middle portion has miniature Buddhas with a figure of a cross-legged sitting Buddha preaching the law in the centre; at the lower level, from south to north is the illustration of the jātaka stories of the nine- coloured deer and Sumati. Below these two stories is a decorative design and further below is a row of yakṣas. The front section of the south wall portrays seven celestial musicians; the middle portion shows a portrait of Vairocana Buddha and the rear top section shows sixteen heavenly musicians; the middle portion is painted with miniature Buddhas with a Buddha standing in a stupa in the centre; below it is the scene of a śrāmaṇera who observes śīla and commits suicide. Further below is a row of yakṣas. The front upper portion of the north wall shows four celestial musicians; the middle portion has a preaching scene while the lower portion is damaged. The rear upper portion of the north wall shows seventeen heavenly musicians; the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas with a Buddha standing in a stupa in the centre. The story of Sumati is described below and further below is a row of yakṣas.

### Cave No. 258

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On the west slope there are fragments of three Avalokiteśvaras, the one in the centre flanked by Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. The top portion on the west wall reveals an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties, on the south and north of the entrance are the portraits of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively. The south and north walls feature Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively, all painted during the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has fragments of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara with a damaged painting on the south wall drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is damaged and pictures on the four slopes blackened. The niche on the sloped ceiling of the west wall shelters statues of a disciple, two bodhisattvas, four devarājas cast in Tang

and a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Qing. The south wall illustrates the Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness. The east side illustrates the Chapter on Discourse while the west side illustrates the Chapter on Evil Friends. The west end reveals a standing bodhisattva. The Amitāyus Sūtra is illustrated on the north wall, with Ajātaśatru to the east and the sixteen meditations to the west. Painted on the west end is a standing bodhisattva which is blackened. Above the entrance of the east wall is a Buddha preaching. On the south side of the entrance is a thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara (the lower portion is damaged), while on its north is a thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with bowls in hands.

### Cave No. 259

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during Song).

**Contents:** The cave has reversed V-shape ceiling in the front portion. Both the slopes have faded and destroyed paintings. In the rear the ceiling flattens with six miniature Buddhas repainted on it in Song. The central column in the centre on the west has a niche which contains statues of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna sitting side by side. On either side of the niche are two bodhisattva statues, with a bodhisattva statue further away on the north and south side of the column. Inside the niche the walls are painted with fourteen bodhisattvas, two bodhi-ratna canopies and ten flying figures. There are three niches on the top portion of the south wall. East-westwards the first niche in a corner has a preaching scene, while outside the niche, on the west side are portraits of two bodhisattvas. The second niche shelters the statue of a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva. The third niche houses a cross-ankled bodhisattva with the east side showing the figures of two bodhisattvas and the west miniature Buddhas. At a lower level in the west end is a niche inside which there are statues of Buddha in padmāsana and a bodhisattva. There is a carved dragon head on the beam. Adorning the north wall is a preaching scene showing a Buddha, two bodhisattvas and eight flying figures. Below the preaching scene on the upper layer of the wall are four niches. From east to west is the first niche which is damaged. Two bodhisattvas are painted on the west of the niche. The second niche contains a meditating bodhisattva. The third and the fourth niches each contain a cross-ankled bodhisattva. Below them there are also three niches. Beginning from east the first niche contains a statue of a meditating Buddha. On its west side only one bodhisattva remains. Painted on the wall inside the niche are two flying figures around the halo. Outside the niche there are seven bodhisattvas on the west. The second niche has a statue of a Buddha preaching. The east and west sides have damaged statues of bodhisattvas. The third niche has the statue of a sitting Buddha preaching with bodhisattva statues on both sides. A dragon head in relief forms the beam. Outside the niche on the west side are the miniature Buddhas. The lower layer has three niches.

### Cave No. 260

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* Donors painted on the north and south walls have faded.

**Main Hall:** Sheltered in the circular east-facing niche on the central column is a preaching Buddha. On either side of the niche is a statue of bodhisattva. Its wall has a flaming halo with eight bodhisattvas and two flying figures on both sides, and beneath each is a lotus with mañi-ratna. The niche lintel shows the lonicera and lotus designs, with a carved phoenix head on the beam. There are statues of fifty-one bodhisattvas on each side. The top part of the south-facing side of the column has a niche with a cross-ankled sitting bodhisattva. Outside the niche, there are twenty-nine bodhisattvas on each side. There is another niche at the lower level. The west-facing side has a niche on top housing a preaching Buddha statue. Outside the niche, there are three bodhisattvas on each side. Another niche below featuring a



meditating Buddha. The north-facing column has a niche on top with statue of a cross-ankled bodhisattva. Outside the niche, on either side are two bodhisattvas. The wall shows two bodhisattvas and two musicians. Above the niche are two phoenixes, four Aupapādakas and figures of twenty-two bodhisattvas. On the lower level another niche shows a meditating Buddha in padmāsana while outside the niche on its two sides are two bodhisattvas each. Portraits of two bodhisattvas are seen on the niche's wall. The west wall of the niche shows sixteen celestial musicians (a majority is damaged due to fumigation) on the top portion. The middle portion has miniature Buddhas with a meditating Buddha in the centre. The lower portion shows border designs with yakṣas painted below the designs. Heavenly musicians are seen in the top portion of the front section of the south wall of which ten figures are extant. Miniature Buddhas cover the middle portion of the south wall with Mañjuśrī-Sūtra in the centre. The lower portion has a border decoration and a donor figure drawn in Song, further below are the yakṣas drawn during Northern Wei. The rear portion shows twelve heavenly musicians. The middle portion shows the miniature Buddhas with a preaching Buddha in the centre. The lower portion has the border designs and further below are the yakṣas. The top portion on the north wall has ten celestial musicians, miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene in the centre decorate the middle level and the lower level shows border designs and a donor figure drawn in Song. The lowest level shows yakṣas drawn during Northern Wei. Six celestial musicians are seen above the entrance of the east wall. Narrative paintings are shown below. This cave was damaged by the Russians living in the neighbourhood in the past.

#### **Cave No. 261**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents: Ante-room:** Three scenes of Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra are seen in three corners of the west wall, an invocation which is inscribed can also be seen on the west wall. On the north and south sides of the entrance are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī. The north and south walls display sūtra illustration and damaged paintings respectively.

**Corridor:** The south wall features male donors of the Cao family.

**Main Hall:** The west slope of the ceiling illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra with details of ordaining and seven crops out of one sowing; the south wall also features the Maitreya-Sūtra; the east wall illustrates a sūtra. The altar on the west wall contains a statue of a sitting Buddha cast in the Five Dynasties along with two bodhisattvas in padmāsana, two bodhisattvas and two devarājas. The east side of the east wall illustrates the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, below this are seven bodhisattvas. On the west side (above the altar) are depicted the eight categories of supernatural beings. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of Rocana Buddha; the south side of the entrance illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra below which is a figure of bodhisattva; the north side illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra below which are bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 262**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The front portion of the west slope of the ceiling shows a preaching scene while the rear portion has the figure of an Asura King flanked by an illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra on either side. On the south and north are portraits of Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti respectively. The shallow circular niche on the west wall shelters statues of sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas. Four disciples are shown on either side of the halo; the lintel shows the figure of an Aupapādaka born out of

lotus. The beam of the niche has a carved dragon head; on the north side outside of the niche are the figures of a musician and bodhisattva. Miniature Buddhas cover the north wall.

#### **Cave No. 263**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** The north wall shows alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche on the central column contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas and a horse-hoof shaped throne cast in Western Xia. The ceiling of the niche shows flower clusters in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The top portion of the west wall is covered by decorative hangings drawn in Western Xia; the middle portion features the miniature Buddhas; the lower portion shows narrow doorway with precious offerings painted inside. The north and south walls have the same features as the west wall. The east wall features three celestial musicians painted during Northern Wei; the middle portion of the wall is covered by miniature Buddhas; at the lower portion are donorbhikṣus; further below are portraits of nine male donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 264**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On the west slope of the ceiling is a preaching scene. The west wall illustrates the Chapter on Buddhhaloka of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra drawn in Song Dynasty. The south wall illustrates a sūtra drawn in Song. The north and south walls portray a bodhisattva each.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra drawn in Song. The north and south slopes have each three cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn in Song. The north and south walls feature alms-offering bodhisattvas also drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The slopes of the ceiling show flying figures along with decorative hangings and chess-board with floral designs (faded because of fumigation). The niche on the west wall contains the statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two devarājas. The north and south walls are covered by miniature Buddhas drawn in Song; the same is seen above the entrance of the east wall. Flaming pearls are seen on north, south and east walls.

#### **Cave No. 265**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the north and south slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The north and south walls of the corridor feature three alms-offering bodhisattvas each.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the central column contains statues of a sitting Buddha and two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Five Dynasties. The ceiling of the niche shows floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The north, south and west walls have similar designs, miniature Buddhas cover the centre portion. The lower level of the north and south walls

exposes miniature Buddhas drawn during Northern Wei and donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene (damaged due to smoke); the Sukhāvataī-Sūtra is illustrated on the north and south sides of the entrance.

**Cave No. 266**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (the stucco statues redecorated in Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling displays four inverted lotuses. To the west of the niche lintel is a painting showing an Aupapādaka, on the two sides are miniature Buddhas in two rows. The south slope is painted with the railings and walls of the celestial palace and decorative hangings. Below these in two rows are miniature Buddhas and five flying figures. The north and the east walls feature similar paintings with the difference in the number of flying figures. A sitting Buddha can be seen in the circular niche of the west wall, outside the niche, on either side is a statue of a bodhisattva. The upper portion of the south wall shows miniature Buddhas; at the lower level are a bhikṣuni and a female donor; further down are the yakṣas. The north wall has the same patterns of paintings as the south wall, instead of female donor there are two male donors. Above the entrance of the east wall and nearer the north are miniature Buddhas, below these miniature portraits are three male donors.

**Cave No. 267**

**Period of Construction:** Sixteen Kingdoms and Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows four inverted lotuses, a flame and decorative hangings. The top portion of the south shows miniature Buddhas; the middle portion has a preaching scene while the lower portion is not clear. The east and west walls feature miniature Buddhas with donors painted below. Above the entrance on the north wall and on its east and west sides are miniature Buddhas. This cave is north-facing and was a meditating cave of Cave No. 268; paintings drawn in Sui feature in this cave.

**Cave No. 268**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms (renovated during Sui and Song).

**Contents:** There are four inverted lotuses on the ceiling with flying figures, Aupapādakas, flame and chess-board patterns on the four sides. The niche on the west wall shelters a cross-ankled Buddha statue, its head was repaired in Song. The south wall features miniature Buddhas and a preaching scene drawn in Sui; the lower level shows figures of yakṣas and flying figures. The north wall has the same features as the south wall.

**Cave No. 269**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms and Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** A pattern is still visible in a corner of the ceiling; the south wall features a preaching scene with donor figures below. The east and the west walls show miniature Buddhas with donor figures at the lower level. Above the entrance on the east wall and on the east and west sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas. This cave is north-facing and has paintings drawn in Sui.

**Cave No. 270**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms and Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Miniature Buddhas cover the north wall with a preaching Buddha in the centre; donor images are below. The top portion of the east and west walls is covered by miniature Buddhas; the middle portion shows a preaching scene; the lower portion has the donors. The south wall is painted with miniature Buddhas; on the west side of the entrance is a male donor.

#### **Cave No. 271**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms and Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene with Buddha and four bodhisattvas; the Ionicera plant forms the border designs on the four slopes. The mural on the north wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching Buddha in the centre; images of donors are below. The east and west walls are painted with miniature Buddhas. The middle portion of these two walls has a preaching scene each. Painted above the entrance of the south wall and to its east and west are miniature Buddhas. On the east side of the entrance at a lower level is a donor figure. This cave acts as a meditating cave and is south-facing having paintings drawn in Sui.

#### **Cave No. 272**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows an Usher Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall features Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and the north wall Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, both drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows four inverted lotus flowers, flame and flying figures. The west slope shows six celestial musicians and a row of bodhisattvas. The south wall has five celestial musicians, six flying figures, miniature Buddhas and a row of Aupapādakas. On the north slope are five celestial musicians, six flying figures and a row of miniature Buddhas. On the east slope are five celestial musicians, a sage with a big head, five flying figures, a bodhisattva and a row of miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of a sitting Buddha (its head was repaired in Qing). Both the north and south walls have miniature Buddhas with a preaching Buddha in the centre, the lower portion is blurred. The east end of the south wall and the west end of the north wall each have a hole drilled in it. The north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall show miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 273**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei.

**Contents:** The niche contains a meditating statue having sharp features and the head covered by a kaṣāya.

#### **Cave No. 274**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents: Main Hall:** The east and west slopes of the ceiling are covered by miniature Buddhas and Ionicera designs. Painted in the niche on the west wall are a halo and four disciples. The south wall

displays miniature Buddhas with female donors below them. Similarly the north wall features miniature Buddhas with male donors below them.

#### **Cave No. 275**

**Period of Construction:** The Sixteen Kingdoms (renovated during Song). This is the earliest cave of the Northern Liang period.

**Contents: Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling and the north and south slopes of the ceiling show traces of paintings drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The west slope of the ceiling shows two flying figures and seven miniature Buddhas; the south slope of the ceiling has three flying figures and fifteen miniature Buddhas; the north slope shows one flying figure and five miniature Buddhas all drawn during Song. The west wall has a statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva sitting with feet crossed; two lion statues on both sides of the throne on the west wall. On the east side of the south wall is a niche sheltering a statue of a meditating bodhisattva; the two sides of the niche have portraits of two bodhisattvas drawn during Song. The north wall has three niches with statues and paintings similar to the niche on the south wall. Below the niche from west to east are the *jātaka* tales of King Bilengkali, King Śibi and King Chandraprabha. Below these tales are shown thirty-three donors drawn in Northern Wei. The wall shows border designs and decorative hangings. Above the entrance of the east wall are three preaching scenes along with five sitting Buddhas. On the south side of the entrance is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara along with two sitting Buddhas. Below them are nine female donors. On the north side of the entrance is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and two damaged figures of female donors.

#### **Cave No. 276**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The west slope of the caisson ceiling shows Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna sharing the same platform drawn in Sui, two kinnaras. Flying figures are drawn on the west and north slopes. The niche on the west wall contains statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha with a disciple and a bodhisattva; the south wall has a preaching scene, at the lower level is a row of female donors; the north wall features a preaching bodhisattva and two attending bodhisattvas; donors are at the lower level. The north side of the entrance on the east wall has a faded *devarāja* in a corner.

#### **Cave No. 277**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The north, south and west slopes are partially covered by miniature Buddhas. The west wall has a niche opening from both inside and outside. The inner layer of the niche's wall is painted with flame, lotus and the Buddha light; the two sides have a flying figure each. Painted on the outer niche's lintel are flame, lotus designs, two flying figures and other figures. In one corner of the south wall are miniature Buddhas; the lower portion displays bodhisattvas drawn in the Five Dynasties. The top portion of the north wall features miniature Buddhas; the middle portion shows Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna. The west side illustrates the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* showing Mañjuśrī; below are the bodhisattvas and female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south side of the entrance on the east wall shows four female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the north side of the entrance are four miniature Buddhas

drawn in Sui, at the lower level are five female donors painted during the Five Dynasties. This cave was cleared in 1947.

#### **Cave No. 278**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling shows miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shows the flame and a Buddha halo in the inner layer with two disciples on either side of the halo; the outer layer of the ceiling of the niche also has flame, Buddha halo. On the two sides of the niche's column are two flying figures and lotus designs. The north and south walls of the niche show the disciples. The south wall shows railings and walls of the celestial mansions, and flying figures at the top, a preaching scene in the middle and five male donors painted in the Five Dynasties at the bottom. The north wall has the same features as the south wall. Of the seven Buddhas which were drawn above the entrance of the east wall there remain only three. On the north and south sides of the entrance is a portrait each of a *devarāja*.

#### **Cave No. 279**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has a lotus flower; on the four slopes are decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The west wall originally had statues of a Buddha, two each of disciples and bodhisattvas, these are all damaged. The wall also features a halo and bodhi tree flanked by three disciple figures on both sides. Miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre cover the south wall; below them is a row of donors, the west end of the wall had statues of attending Bodhisattvas but they are damaged now. The north wall has the same features as the south wall and in the same order. The east end of the north wall shows *devarājas*. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas; a *devarāja* is on the north side of the entrance. This cave was discovered in June 1947.

#### **Cave No. 280**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows a portion of a painting. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls feature preaching scenes. All these are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The front part of the ceiling in the main hall is painted with miniature Buddhas. The west wall features a statue of standing Buddha without head and a statue of Ānanda. On either side of the Buddha statue are four disciples, lotus flower and Ionic designs. The south corner shows Śākyamuni being ordained to monkhood, the north side has Buddha riding an elephant and entering Māyādevī's womb. The south wall is painted with miniature Buddhas; a *bhikṣuṇī* and fifteen female donors are at the lower level. The north wall has the same painting as the south wall but instead of female donors there are male donors. Miniature Buddhas cover the space above the entrance of the east wall. On the south side of the entrance are miniature Buddhas, below are the ox carts and attendants. On the north side are miniature Buddhas below which are horse grooms, horses and attendants. This cave was buried in Qing and was excavated on January 15, 1944.

#### **Cave No. 281**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Murals drawn during the Five Dynasties are seen at the lower level on the south side of the west wall entrance, these are blurred; the north side shows a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa; below it are three male donors.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has a painting at the lower layer drawn during the Five Dynasties. The murals on the north and south walls are faded and drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has the cross-cudgel designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by circular lines and decorative hangings; the north, south and east sides have floral designs and decorative hangings; the west slope shows a canopy of bodhi-ratna. Buddha light drawn during Western Xia is on the west wall, on its two sides are halo and flowers; a sitting Buddha, disciples and donors drawn during Sui are at the lower level. The west wall also has a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The surface layer of the north and south walls has portraits of two bodhisattvas drawn during Western Xia. Precious offerings are painted above the entrance of the east wall; a standing bodhisattva is painted on the north and south sides of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 282**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents: Ante-room:** To the north and south of the entrance on the west wall are lonicera border designs drawn in Sui.

**Main Hall:** The south and north sides of the entrance on the west wall in the ante-room show the lonicera designs. The ceiling in the main hall is covered by the miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha and two disciples, outside the niche are two statues of bodhisattvas. Statues of Buddha and two bodhisattvas carved during Sui are on the south wall. The mural on the wall shows miniature Buddhas; below are portraits of two female donors. The north wall shows similar paintings. On the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas; below are traces of female donors.

#### **Cave No. 283**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang.

**Contents:** The west and north slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The south, west and north slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha and two disciples (two bodhisattva statues are lost). The south wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; below them are blurred images of donors and warriors. The north wall is partially covered by miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 284**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Painted on the west slope of the ceiling are four bodhisattvas with three heads and six arms and three heads and four arms. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has two flying figures. The north and south walls are covered by miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. Painted below in

the three corners are decorative hangings. To the north, south and above the lintel of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

### **Cave No. 285**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (renovated during Middle Tang, Song, Western Xia and Yuan Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has a painting which has faded completely and was drawn during Song. Above the entrance on the west wall is Cave No. 286. On the south side of the entrance are donors painted in Song. The lower portion has a painting drawn in Middle Tang and the lowermost portion has one drawn in Western Wei. The north side of the entrance is Cave No. 287 showing a donor figure drawn during Song. The north and south walls feature murals which are faded, drawn in Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a cross-legged sitting Buddha; the north and south walls feature Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara both drawn in Middle Tang.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling of the cave has large paintings on top and also on the four slopes featuring very interesting figures which deserve careful study. It seems to be scenes of the Heaven above Mount Sumeru, but the celestial figures painted look eclectic, mixing Chinese legends with Indian traditions (both Buddhist and Brahmanical perhaps). The Dunhuang Academy has identified "Kaiming" (Vimalacitra), "Zhuque" (Garuḍa), "Feilian" (a winged animal figure), "Ren-fei-ren"/"Wuhuo" (?), "Fuxi" (the "sun god" ?), "Nuwa" (the "moon god") etc. whose identities may need further examination. The two figures on the east slope who are identified as Fuxi and Nuwa are holding the stem of a lotus plant on top of which seems to be a jewel symbolizing Dharmaratna. The same lotus painting figures also on the south slope, on the Dharmaratna there seem to be white snakes drawn on it. The south wall has twelve celestial musicians on the top portion; the middle portion has a scene from the story of Aptanetravana (the forest of recovered eyes). The west end exhibits Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna; below are four meditating caves with Ionic designs painted in each of them. East-westwards on the north wall are the portraits of Buddha of boundless life, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, Buddha, Śākyā and Prabhūtaratna and seven preaching scenes; below each painting is inscribed an invocation along with male and female donor figures. Above the entrance on the east wall is a portrait of Buddha of the three worlds; Buddha of boundless age is to the south of the entrance; below them is inscribed an invocation; fourteen male donors are shown on the south side. On the north side are thirteen female donors; below them are the donors drawn in Song and further below is a yakṣa painted in Western Wei. Portrayed on the north side of the entrance is the Buddha of boundless age; below is inscribed an invocation. On the south side are fourteen female donors while the north side has thirteen male donors. The north wall was constructed in the fourth year of Datong era (539) and in the fifth year of the same era the invocation was inscribed.

### **Cave No. 286**

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei (renovated during Middle Tang).

**Contents:** The east slope of the ceiling shows lotus and maṇi designs. Only two of the four lotus and maṇi designs drawn on the west slope are clear. The west wall features a preaching scene drawn during Middle Tang; the south wall is covered by miniature Buddhas, a portion of which is blurred; at the lower level are decorative hangings which are blurred. The north wall features the same mural as the south wall. This cave is positioned above the entrance on the west wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 285.



**Cave No. 287**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: *Ante-room:*** The west wall has portraits of donors drawn during Song.

***Main Hall:*** The ceiling has pomegranate and floral designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The circular niche on the west wall shelters a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Early Tang. The north and south walls have each two rows of miniature Buddhas on the top portion; a preaching scene in the middle portion; four Vajrā warriors drawn during the Five Dynasties in the lower portion. There are miniature Buddhas above the entrance of the east wall; portraits of *devarājas* are seen on the north and south sides of the entrance; at the lower level are flowers drawn during the Five Dynasties. This cave is located beyond the west wall to the north of the entrance in the ante-room of Cave No. 285.

**Cave No. 288**

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei (renovated during Tang and the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: *Ante-room:*** The west slope of the ceiling features the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall is inscribed an invocation flanked by the figure of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. The inner layer of wall coating on the south side of the entrance exposes portraits of *devarājas* drawn during Western Wei, the middle layer has a painting drawn in Tang and the surface layer shows a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties which is blurred. The north side of the entrance shows a painting on the inner layer drawn during Western Xia, the middle layer has a painting drawn in Tang and the surface layer-a blurred painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. The inner layer of the south wall has a portrait of *devarāja* drawn during Western Wei; the middle layer has a painting drawn in Tang and the surface layer illustrates the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* below which are donors; both the *sūtra* illustration and donors are drawn during the Five Dynasties. The inner layer of the north wall shows traces of a painting from Western Wei, the middle layer has a portrait of Mañjuśrī with thousand arms and thousand bowls drawn in Tang, the surface layer has a blurred painting drawn during the Five Dynasties.

***Corridor:*** The centre of the ceiling illustrates the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra* drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings also drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls feature portraits of *Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara* and *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara* respectively, both are drawn in the Five Dynasties. Below both these portraits is drawn a narrow doorway with precious offerings painted inside it.

***Main Hall:*** The east-facing circular niche of the central column shelters the statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha. Outside the niche is a *bodhisattva* statue, on either side. The south-facing side of the column has two niches. The top one housing a meditating Buddha, while the lower one a Buddha practising ascetics. The west-facing side of the column has two niches with a cross-legged sitting Buddha inside the top niche and a meditating Buddha in the lower one. The north-facing side has two niches both housing a meditating Buddha. The top portion of the west wall shows thirteen heavenly musicians, the middle portion has miniature Buddhas with a white-robed Buddha preaching the dharma, in the centre; below these in the three corners are decorative hangings. The south wall depicts nineteen celestial musicians on the top layer, the front portion has a preaching scene, the rear portion shows miniature Buddhas having the preaching scene in the centre; the three corners at the lower layer show

decorative hangings. The north wall shows eighteen celestial musicians with the front and rear portion of the wall having the same paintings as the south wall. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are fourteen celestial musicians. To the south of the entrance is miniature Buddha depiction; a donor bhikṣunī, eight female donors and three attendants are below; further below these are two female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The three corners show floral motifs. On the north side of the entrance are miniature Buddhas; below these are six male donors, three attendants and a donor bhikṣu, a groom and a horse, below these are floral designs in the three corners.

#### **Cave No. 289**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** Floral designs are painted on the ceiling; the north, south and west slopes have the floral motifs and decorative hangings. The circular niche of the west wall contains a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha; the niche has a portrait of a disciple, a bodhisattva, halo and flowers drawn during Song, of which a portion has been damaged due to drilling during the Five Dynasties. The lower layer has a painting drawn during Sui; the north wall features disciples, halo and flowers.

#### **Cave No. 290**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The east-facing circular niche on the central column contains statues of sitting Buddha, two disciples. Outside the niche on both sides is a bodhisattva statue. The ceiling and the walls of the niche show several designs. The west-facing circular niche has statues of a cross-ankled bodhisattva, and two bodhisattvas. Outside on the two sides is a bodhisattva statue. The south-facing circular niche has statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples. There is bodhisattva statue on each of the two sides outside the niche. The north-facing circular niche contains the same statues as the other three niches. The west wall shows celestial palace railings and walls, twenty-four musicians on the top layer, the middle layer shows miniature Buddha depiction with the lower layer having a painting of sixty donor bhikṣus; further below are eleven yakṣas. The south wall shows the same painting as the west wall, but in the front portion there are eight celestial musicians, a meditating Buddha, one Buddha, two bodhisattvas and four aupapādakas, the middle portion has the depiction of miniature Buddhas, there are three donor bhikṣus and eleven male donors shown below; the lowermost layer shows a painting of yakṣas (blurred). The rear portion also has celestial palace railings and walls, twenty celestial musicians on the top layer; the middle portion shows miniature Buddhas and below these are thirty-five donor bhikṣus along with fifty male donors and yakṣas. The east wall shows heavenly palace railings and walls, lonicera designs etc. There are ten heavenly musicians on each of the two sides; the centre shows miniature Buddhas; the lower portion shows donors and horse-drawn chariots (blurred); further below are the yakṣas (blurred).

#### **Cave No. 291**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope has decorative hangings (a large portion is damaged). Painted above the entrance of the west wall are seven cross-legged sitting bodhisattvas; the south side of the entrance shows two bodhisattvas and the north side a bodhisattva.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling is painted with floral designs. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls are painted with hanging curtains.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has the cross-cudgel designs with round petalled lotus in the centre; on the four slopes are shown the circular lines, floral motifs; chess-board patterns can be seen on the north, south and west slopes. The east slope is covered by the circular lines and floral motifs. The circular niche of the west wall contains a statue of a sitting Buddha repaired during Western Xia. The south wall is painted with decorative hangings on the top, the Sukhāvati-Sūtra is illustrated in the middle portion. The north wall's illustrations are the same as the south wall. Decorative hangings and two flying figures are seen above the entrance of the east wall, on the south side of the entrance is a portrait of Mañjuśrī and on the north side is Samantabhadra.

### Cave No. 292

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during High Tang, the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas drawn during High Tang. Above the entrance of the west wall is inscribed an invocation on either side of which are two cross-legged sitting Buddhas. On the south side of the entrance is a statue of a Vajrū warrior and a portrait of thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. The lower layer shows a narrative painting from Sui. To the north of the entrance is a statue of Vajrā warrior, a painting drawn in the Five Dynasties which is damaged and a narrative painting from Sui can be seen at the bottom. The top portion of the south wall illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties; blurred images of donors are seen below. The north wall displays a portrait of Mañjuśrī drawn during the Five Dynasties; below it donor images.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls feature a devarāja drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall shows donors at the lower level.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the east-facing side of the central column contains a standing Buddha statue, miniature Buddhas are painted on the wall, a donorbhikṣu is painted on either side of miniature Buddhas. The niches on the north, south and west faces of the column shelter statues of a meditating Buddha and two disciples. The front portion of the caisson ceiling and the east slope show miniature Buddhas. The Buddha of three Lokas can be seen in the shallow niche on the west slope; painted on the two sides are devarājas, gods, bodhisattva, seven disciples and two flying figures. Miniature Buddhas can be seen to the south of the rear portion and to the north is a supplementary painting of miniature Buddha belonging to Western Xia. There is a standing Buddha statue in the front portion of south wall along with Buddha throne drawn in High Tang. The south wall features flying musicians and celestial palace railings and walls on the top layer, miniature Buddhas in the middle, nine yakṣas at the lower level. The north wall shows the same paintings as the south wall and so does the west wall. Above the entrance of the east wall there are depictions of musicians and flying figures, celestial palace railings and walls, the middle portion shows Aupapādakas and miniature Buddhas and the lower portion shows six yakṣas (blurred).

### Cave No. 293

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The east and the west slopes of the ceiling have miniature Buddhas, the ridge of the slopes shows garlands and hanging curtains as the border designs. The circular niche on the west wall contains

statues of Buddha and two bodhisattvas which have been repaired in Qing, formerly there were two disciple statues also, but these have been damaged now. There are blurred images of miniature Buddhas in the niche and also on the south, north slopes and outside the niche. The north and south walls are covered by miniature Buddhas, one half of which was damaged while hewing caves during Qing. Above the entrance and to the south are miniature Buddhas (blurred) with a damaged painting of donors drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 294**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing Dynasty).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling depicts a meditating Buddha. The south slope shows portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and the north the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties flanked by the “Moon-and-Water” Avalokiteśvara on the two sides. On the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively. The south wall has the sūtra illustration painted during the Five Dynasties. The north wall has a portrait of thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties; below it are donors.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south slopes each show five cross-legged sitting Buddha. The north and south walls feature Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively both drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows a sitting Buddha in the centre with lotus and flames in the background. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings encircling miniature Buddhas, the four slopes are painted with life of Buddha; below are the palace railings, flying figures and decorative hangings. The circular niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples. On both sides of the niche are two celestial figures identified as Dong Wanggong or Indra and Xi Wangmu or Indra's queen. The south wall shows miniature Buddhas with the preaching scene in the centre; below is a row of donors, four musicians, eleven bhikṣus and twenty-one male donors; further below are the yakṣas (blurred). The north wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre (blurred); below is a row of donors, ten bhikṣuniṣ and eleven female donors with an attendant. Further below are shown thirteen yakṣas (blurred). Above the entrance on the east wall and on the south side of the entrance are miniature Buddhas, below are seven female donors, female attendants and a bullock cart. The yakṣas occupy the lowermost level. The north side of the entrance has miniature Buddhas; eight male donors, attendants, horse and driver are at the lower level and further below are the yakṣas (blurred).

#### **Cave No. 295**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (the stucco statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The east slope of the ceiling shows miniature Buddhas while the west slope shows the Nirvāṇa-Sūtra while lotus and gems are painted on the ridge. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha and two disciples (repaired in Qing). The south wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; the lower level shows ten female donors. The north wall shows miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre, below these are portraits of twelve male donors. The east wall also shows miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 296**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has a painting of the Buddha of Medicine of the East drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall is a preaching scene, a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa drawn in the Five Dynasties is to the south of the entrance, donor figures are seen below. To the north of the entrance is a portrait of Virūdhaka. The south wall portrays Samantabhadra drawn during the Five Dynasties; donor figures are shown below. The north wall features Mañjuśrī drawn during the Five Dynasties with donor figures below it.

**Corridor:** An Usher Buddha in the centre of the ceiling drawn in the Five Dynasties. Both the north and south slopes of the ceiling feature three cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The north and south walls have a preaching scene.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has four inverted lotus flowers, lonicera designs and flying figures in the centre. On the four slopes can be seen miniature Buddhas, lonicera designs and decorative hangings. The west slope shows narrative paintings. The niche on the west wall contains the statue of a sitting Buddha along with two disciple statues. On both sides of the niche are two celestial figures identified as Dong-wanggong or Indra and Xiwangmu or Indra's wife. The south wall has miniature Buddhas along with, the Aptanetravana and nine yakṣas. The north wall has similar paintings. Below the miniature Buddhas is a description of the chapter on Lady Sumati and eight yakṣa figures. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas; two bhikṣus and eleven female donors are below; further below are three yakṣas. Miniature Buddhas cover the north side of the entrance. Painted below these figures are seven male donors; further below are three yakṣas.

**Cave No. 297**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Three Buddhas preaching the dharma are depicted on the west slope of the ceiling drawn during the Five Dynasties. An invocation of the Five Dynasties vintage is inscribed on the upper portion of the west wall flanked by two bodhisattvas, south and north of the entrance features Devarājas of the Five Dynasties; a bodhisattva figure is seen on the south wall and the north wall features Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha. Both these paintings are drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** Centre of the niche features a painting of Usher Buddha and four cross-legged sitting Buddhas on the north and south slopes.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows four inverted lotus designs; the four slopes show decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, Ānanda and Kāśyapa. Outside, to the north and south are bodhisattva statues, one on each side. The north and south walls have miniature Buddha figures with a row of donor figures below; the east wall features miniature Buddhas above the entrance and the north and south sides have the same figures; below is a row of donors and further below is a row of yakṣas.

**Cave No. 298**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The east and west slopes of the ceiling are covered by miniature Buddhas. The west wall has a Buddha throne cast in Western Xia having clouds as border designs. A preaching scene is featured on the wall; below it is inscribed an invocation. There are two male and two female donors on either side (blurred). The top layer of the south wall shows miniature Buddhas; below these only four figures are unimpaired in a row of donors. The north wall also shows miniature Buddhas on the top layer and a row of donors at the bottom, only three remain. Above the entrance of the east wall is the portrait of a meditating Buddha. To the north and south of the entrance is a *devarāja*. Originally there were no statues in this cave, during Western Xia and Jin Dynasties statues of Buddha and two bodhisattvas were placed on the west wall, but the statues are lost today.

### Cave No. 299

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A preaching scene drawn during the Five Dynasties is above the entrance of the west wall. On the south side of the entrance is a depiction of Amoghapāśa-Avalokiteśvara while to the north is a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara both drawn during the Five Dynasties and both are blurred from below.

**Corridor:** The ceiling displays a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls feature a bodhisattva each also drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows four inverted lotus flowers. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings; to the south of the niche lintel is illustrated the *jātaka* of Prince Sattva; there are also celestial palace musicians. The story of Samaka and heavenly palace musicians are depicted to the north of the niche lintel. The circular niche on the west wall contains the statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples (the head was repaired during Qing). On each of the north and south sides outside the niche is a bodhisattva statue. The niche's walls show the Buddha light, a flying figure on each side and a disciple. Below to the south is the figure of a deer-headed *brahmacārin* and to the north is Vasudeva. The niche's lintel shows the lotus-born *Aupapādakas*, *kinnara* musicians and a lotus column. The north and south sides each have a bodhisattva statue; below the niche flanking the inscribed invocation are two donor figures, further below are six *yakṣas*. The south wall shows miniature Buddhas, the donor figures are shown below. A hole drilled during the Qing is seen on the lower level of the wall. Below miniature Buddhas on the north wall are two donors; decorative hangings seen on the ridge of the three walls; as in the south wall, this wall too shows a hole drilled during the Qing. Above the entrance of the east wall and to the north and south are miniature Buddhas, below these are the donors drawn in the Five Dynasties; below them is a *yakṣa* on the north side.

### Cave No. 300

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a portrait of Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. To the south of the entrance is Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara also from the Five Dynasties the lower portion of which is blurred. To the north of the entrance is an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara with its lower portion blurred.

**Main Hall:** The east slope of the ceiling shows a canopy of *bodhi-ratna*; the west slope depicts a meditating Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties. In the circular niche on the west wall is a statue of sitting

Buddha. Lotus designs can be seen on both sides, outside the niche. The south wall has a portrait of *devarāja* drawn during the Five Dynasties (blurred) and the north wall of *Vaiśravaṇa* (blurred).

### Cave No. 301

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* Above the entrance of the west wall in the ante-room is a portrait of *Kṣitigarbha*, its top portion is damaged. On the south side of the entrance is a portrait of the eleven-headed *Avalokiteśvara*. On the north side is another painting, all these are drawn during the Five Dynasties.

*Corridor:* The ceiling shows a preaching scene. The north and south walls of the corridor have two *bodhisattvas* each drawn during the Five Dynasties.

*Main Hall:* The ceiling shows four inverted lotus flowers in the centre; the four slopes are covered by the decorative hangings. The west slope has the designs of *maṇi* and pearl in lotus flanked by flying musicians; the south slope illustrates scenes from the *Jātaka* of Prince *Sattva*. Below this illustration are the celestial musicians and decorative hangings. The north slope has the story of *Samaka*: the west side shows *Samaka* offering his services to his blind parents. The east side depicts the King of *Kapilavastu* going to hunt. The east slope has the story of Prince *Sattva* feeding himself to the hungry tigress, a pagoda built in his memory. The lower portion of the east slope is covered by celestial musicians, flying figures and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall shelters a sitting Buddha. The south wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre, below are the figures of two *Raudrākṣas*. On the west side are a donor *bhikṣu*, seventeen male donors and a *Raudrākṣa*; the east side shows twelve female donors. During *Qing* a portion of the mural was damaged due to drilling of a hole. The north wall has miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The lower section of the west side shows three donor *bhikṣus*, fourteen male donors and a *Raudrākṣa*. The lower section of the east side shows eighteen *bhikṣus* and eight donors. The mural on the east wall features miniature Buddhas; below on the south side are the figures of three female donors, a donor, ox cart and two attendants. Three female donor figures are seen at a lower level as also a horse. On the north side at a lower level are seen two donor *bhikṣus* and six donors. Further below are the figures of three donor *bhikṣus* and three male donors.

### Cave No. 302

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song and *Qing*).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* The west slope of the ceiling shows two rows of miniature Buddhas drawn during *Song*. A *Song* Dynasty invocation is inscribed on the west wall. On both sides of it are *Vaiśravaṇa* attending *Nata's* sermon. To the south of the entrance, at the top level is a portrait of *Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara*. The middle portion has the depiction of *Nāgarājas* paying homage to Buddha while the lower portion is blurred. *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvarais* on top of the north side of the entrance while the middle and lower portions have the same features as the south side. The north and south walls have a painting each drawn during *Song*.

*Corridor:* The ceiling portrays the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed *Avalokiteśvara* in the centre, drawn during *Song*. The north and south slopes have four sitting Buddhas each painted in *Song*. The

south wall features a male donor and his attendants. The north wall shows a female donor with attendants.

**Main Hall:** The central column assumes the shape of Mount Sumeru with a seven-storeyed pagoda on top, miniature Buddha on the top six storeys of the pagoda and four dragons circling the lower storey of it. The east-facing niche contains statues of Buddha, two bodhisattvas and outside the niche on either side are two bodhisattva statues. The south-facing niche also contains similar statues as the east-facing one, the statues were repaired in Qing. The west-facing niche has statues of a Buddha and two disciples which have been repaired in Qing. Figures of two Aupapādakas are featured on the niche wall. Outside the niche on the two sides are two bodhisattva statues. The north-facing niche is similar to the west-facing one in contents. On front portion of the east slope of the ceiling are the depictions of King Bilengkali, King Śibi and below these is the story of Samaka; the top portion of the west slope carries the story of Prince Sattva and the lower portion the Sputra of rich fields. The west wall shows celestial musicians and a glimpse of paradise. Miniature Buddhas cover the centre portion of the wall with the inner layer revealing eight bhikṣunīs painted during Sui. The top and middle portions of the south wall are similar to the west wall. The middle level is painted with miniature Buddhas with Bhaiṣajyaguru below them in the front and miniature Buddha paintings and a double chamber altar at the rear. Below them the Song painting of bhikṣus on the surface layer is damaged and fragments of Sui painting on the inner layer are exposed. The north and east walls have similar features as the other two walls. An inscription dated the fourth year of the Kaihuang Era of Sui (593) can be seen to the north side of the central column.

### Cave No. 303

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn in the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties flanked by a bodhisattva on either side. To the south of the entrance are figures of a bodhisattva and ayakṣa while the north side of the entrance illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra with donor figures painted below. The north and south walls have paintings of adevarāja each.

**Corridor:** The south wall features a portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara drawn during Five Dynasties. The north wall has a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The central column is in the shape of Mount Sumeru. Its upper portion is a circular shaped seven-storeyed pagoda with miniature Buddhas on the top six storeys and four dragons circling the lower storey. The east-facing niche on the column contains statues of Buddha and two disciples. Painted inside the niche are the Aupapādakas and outside the niche on the two sides are bodhisattva statues. The north, south and west-facing niches have the same features as the east-facing one with only one disciple statue in the north-facing niche. The front portion of the east and west slopes of the ceiling illustrates the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara (thirty-three manifestations of Avalokiteśvara) of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. The rear portion of the slope is painted with decorative hangings. The four corners reveal a meditating Buddha each and these are surrounded by miniature Buddhas. The top portion of the west wall shows heavenly musicians, palace railings and walls, decorative hangings; the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas; the lower portion shows twenty-two donors and further below is a scenery of landscape with people at work. The top portion of the south wall has heavenly palace musicians, wall railings and decorative hangings and the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas.

### Cave No. 304



**Period of Construction:** Sui (the stucco statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows four lotus flowers in the centre; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings, six celestial musicians, mansions with railings and walls. The circular niche on the west wall contains the statues of a sitting Buddha (its head was repaired during Qing), Kāśyapa and Ānanda. Outside the niche, on the north and south sides are the bodhisattva statues. The north and south walls have miniature Buddhas; at the lower level are the donors four and five respectively. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas; two devarājas are on the two sides of the entrance.

### Cave No. 305

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling still shows a portion of a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the west wall are portraits of seven Buddhas painted in the Five Dynasties and an invocation which is inscribed is flanked by bodhisattva figures. The south side of the entrance illustrates the Samantabhadra Sūtra; the north side illustrates the Mañjuśrī Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north wall shows devarāja and the south wall a painting, both drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling features Kṣitigarbha drawn in the Five Dynasties. A portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara is featured on the south wall and the north wall has a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, both drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The square shape column in the centre has the statues of a Buddha, two each of disciples and standing bodhisattvas. On the east side of the column are the Ionicera border designs; below are two donor bhikṣus and eight male donors. The south-facing side of the column shows the Ionicera border designs with eight female and three male donors. The west-facing side of the column shows the same border designs; below are eight donor bhikṣus. The north-facing side shows ten female and two male donors below with the same border designs seen on the top level. The centre of the ceiling depicts four lotuses and flying figures; the four slopes have the decorative hangings. The centre of the east and west slopes has the maṇi flanked by eight flying figures. The west wall features miniature Buddhas. The circular niche of the west wall contains the statues two each of disciples and bodhisattvas and a cross-legged sitting Buddha. The south wall depicts miniature Buddhas. The circular niche contains Qing statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, disciple and two bodhisattvas. The north wall has the same features. Above the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas. The north and south sides of the entrance have miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; below these are nineteen donors; further below are decorative hangings. This cave was constructed in the fifth year of Kaihuang Era of Sui (594).

### Cave No. 306

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the south wall is a preaching scene drawn in Western Xia; above the preaching scene is a flying figure drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the east side of the entrance are the figures of two bodhisattvas; on the west side are portrayed the Aupapādaka Kumāras.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has floral designs. The top portions of the east and west walls have two cross-legged sitting Buddhas each; the middle portion shows “Damoduoluo” i.e., Dharmottara or Dharmatrāta, an ancient Indian commentator, according to the Dunhuang Academy.

**Main Hall:** The front and the rear portions of the north and south slopes of the ceiling in the main hall have floral designs. The top portion of the south wall is covered by decorative hangings, the mid portion has a preaching scene. The top portion of the east and west walls is painted with decorative hangings. The middle portion illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the north wall are the seven Buddhas and decorative hangings; to the east of the entrance are decorative hangings while the west side shows the bodhisattvas. This cave is north-facing and was originally one of the caves adjacent to Cave No. 307.

### Cave No. 307

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia, and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has floral patterns; the lower level of the slope shows damaged paintings from Sui and the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall are decorative hangings and a preaching scene; the north and south sides of the entrance illustrate the Sukhāvati-Sūtra which is blurred at the bottom. The south wall is Cave No. 306 and the north wall is Cave No. 308.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls feature a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs and the rear portion shows coiled dragons with round petalled lotus in the centre. The niche on the west wall shelters a set of nine Buddha statues (Buddha, four disciples and four bodhisattvas) cast in Qing along with a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The top portions of the north and south walls are painted with decorative hangings; the middle portion has two scenes from the Sukhāvati-Sūtra. There is a preaching scene above the entrance of the east wall; the north and south sides of the entrance have the same feature.

### Cave No. 308

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the north wall is a preaching scene. On the east side are the figures of two bodhisattvas; portraits of Aupapādakas are shown on the west side of the entrance. The west wall reveals a preaching scene drawn during the Five Dynasties which is now peeling off. The lower level shows a damaged painting drawn during Sui.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral patterns in the centre; the east and west slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The east and west walls have once again a Dharmottara each according to Dunhuang Academy.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows floral patterns. The top portion of the north wall has decorative hangings, the middle section shows a preaching scene. The top portions of the east and west walls are painted with decorative hangings, the middle portion illustrates the Sukhāvati-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the south

wall are the decorative hangings and lotus flanked by the figure of a bodhisattva on either side. This cave is south-facing.

### Cave No. 309

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west wall shows three Buddha figures. An invocation is inscribed below these figures flanked by bodhisattvas on either side. On the north and south sides of the entrance are the portraits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. Both these are blurred.

**Corridor:** The ceiling carries floral patterns in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. Both the north and south walls show fragments of the portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha.

**Main Hall:** The front portion of the east and west slopes of the ceiling in the main hall show citron lines and in the citron is shown passion flower (dahlia). The rear portion displays floral designs. The west wall has a circular niche sheltering a set of five cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The inner wall of the niche shows the a flaming halo flanked by four disciples and two flying figures. Painted on the niche's lintel are the lotus-born Aupapādakas. A bodhisattva figure is painted on both the north and south sides outside the niche. A preaching scene is illustrated on each of the north and south walls; donor figures are seen below. Above the entrance of the east wall are the portraits of seven Buddhas. To the north and south are the figures of a six-armed bodhisattva with donor figures below. The niche contains paintings drawn during Sui which have been redone in Western Xia.

### Cave No. 310

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows lotus flowers in the centre; the north and south slopes feature a canopy of bodhi-ratna. The north and south walls are painted with bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling has coiled dragon designs. The four slopes are covered with floral designs. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, a bodhisattva cast in Sui and statues of a bodhisattva and two disciples cast in Qing. The south wall shows a preaching Buddha and below it are the donors. The north wall has an inclined-sitting meditating Buddha with female donors at a lower level. Above the entrance of the east wall is inscribed an invocation flanked by two bodhisattvas on either side. On the south and north sides of the entrance are the figures of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively.

### Cave No. 311

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a mural showing Vaiśravaṇa and Avalokiteśvara attending Nata's sermon drawn during the Five Dynasties. There are damaged paintings drawn in Sui to the north and south of the entrance.

**Corridor:** The surface layer of the centre of the ceiling has a painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. The lower level exhibits lotus drawn in Sui; the north and south slopes have each three cross-legged sitting

Buddhas drawn in the Five Dynasties and the north and south walls have each a male donor also drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows lotus flowers and dancing figures; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings in the corners. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene in the centre. At the lower level are portraits of bodhisattvas drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance and to the north and south of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddha figures; below are male and female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 312**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows traces of a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The east and west slopes of the ceiling are covered by miniature Buddhas; the niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha and two disciples cast in Qing. The south and north walls feature miniature Buddhas. Miniature Buddhas cover the space above the entrance of the east wall. The north and south sides of the entrance portray a bodhisattva each drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 313**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Late Tang, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows auspicious symbols in the centre; the north and south slopes have portraits of five Buddhas each.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has lotus designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings in the corners. The west wall has statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas cast in Late Tang and statues of two disciples cast in Qing. The scene of Bodhisattva Maitreya preaching dharma adorns the south wall. The north wall features a preaching scene. Above the entrance of the east wall are portraits of seven Buddhas; on the north side of the entrance is a picture of devarāja.

#### **Cave No. 314**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A portrait of Kṣitigarbha and ten kings of hell decorates the space above the entrance of the west wall; on the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. All these were drawn during Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows four lotus flowers in the centre. The north and south slopes have decorative hangings and the south wall has a portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows Aupapādakas born out of lotus in the centre. The four slopes are covered by hanging curtains and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged

sitting Buddha cast in Sui and of four disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north and south walls have symmetrical paintings of miniature Buddhas on top and preaching scene below. Portraits of miniature Buddhas and seven Buddhas are painted above the entrance of the east wall; on the south and north sides of the entrance are the scenes of preaching under trees. Along the entrance are the pictures of flowers and clouds painted during Western Xia.

**Cave No. 315**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** Only decorative hangings on the western corner of the ceiling design remain. Miniature Buddhas painted on the west slope have faded. The same on the south slope has a fragment in a corner. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The south and north walls feature miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 316**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Yuan).

**Contents:** The west wall shows a shallow altar without painting.

**Cave No. 317**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Fragments of miniature Buddhas are on the west slope of the ceiling. The niche on the west wall are painted with designs of Ionicera and lotus flowers. The niche's lintel is damaged. Outside the niche, on the north side is the portrait of a bodhisattva.

**Cave No. 318**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of Buddha cast in Qing. The west wall inside the niche displays a flaming halo and two flying figures; both the north and south walls have a bodhisattva figure and sketches of five disciples without colouring. The north and south walls are partially covered by miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 319**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling has three flower clusters in the centre; the four slopes have the floral border designs. The north, south and west slopes are painted with the portraits of miniature Buddhas. There is a horse-hoof shaped altar and on it are the statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas; below their feet is a depiction of Earth God. Halo is carved in the centre of the west wall in relief with three Buddha disciples on both sides. The north and south walls have miniature Buddhas. The western end shows figures of two bodhisattvas, a disciple and a halo.

**Cave No. 320**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, Song and Yuan).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs drawn in Song as the central painting. The north and south slopes have decorative hangings. The south wall features a bodhisattva drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has peony flowers in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of Buddha, disciple and two bodhisattvas. The ceiling of the niche has a scene of Maitreya preaching the dharma. The south wall features miniature Buddhas having an illustration of the Amitābha-Sūtra in the centre (was taken away by an American in 1924). Below this are seventeen male donors drawn in Song. The north wall features the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra. On its east is Ajātaśatru and on its west are the sixteen meditations; the east end has a bodhisattva and a donor bhikṣu drawn in Middle Tang; the west end shows a bodhisattva also drawn in Middle Tang. Below these are seventeen female donors drawn in Song. Above the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas drawn in Song. To the south of the entrance are two alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn in Song; below them are two male donors; to the north of the entrance are two alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn in Song and a bodhisattva drawn in Yuan.

#### **Cave No. 321**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The south side of the entrance on the west wall illustrates the Naraka-Sūtra and this peeled off in 1965. The north side has a damaged painting drawn during the Five Dynasties and below this is a painting drawn in Early Tang.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows the canopy of bodhi-ratna in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall features the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and north wall features Mañjuśrī-Sūtra both drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows floral designs. Miniature Buddhas cover the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha, two warriors cast in Early Tang (repaired in Qing), and two statues each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The south wall illustrates the Ratnavarsha-Sūtra; below it are the portraits of male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The top and middle layers show a preaching Buddha flanked by a cross-legged sitting and preaching Buddha. A standing Buddha figure is to the south and middle of entrance, at the lower level are the portraits of donors (blurred) drawn during the Five Dynasties; on the north and middle of the entrance is the portrait of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara with male donors below, drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 322**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows cross-legged sitting Buddhas in the centre; the north and south slopes feature two cross-legged sitting Buddhas each.

**Main Hall:** Grapes with vine designs are on the ceiling while four celestial musicians fly around decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas. A preaching scene is the central painting in a miniature Buddha depiction on the south wall. The north wall features miniature Buddhas with

the Sūtra for Amitābha in the centre. There are three preaching scenes above the entrance of the east wall; on the south side is a standing Bhaiṣajyaguru, on the north side are pictures drawn during the Five Dynasties of a bodhisattva, four sitting Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

### **Cave No. 323**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows floral designs drawn during Western Xia. To the south of the entrance on the west wall is illustrated the Samantabhadra-Sūtra; to the north is illustrated the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra, both these are drawn in Western Xia; at a lower level are miniature Buddhas drawn in the Five Dynasties and a damaged painting drawn in High Tang. The south wall is Cave No. 324, a damaged painting drawn in Western Xia remains. The north wall is Cave No. 325, and has a preaching scene also drawn in Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre. The north and south walls have each three bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral patterns; the four slopes have the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of sitting Buddha, two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in High Tang. The north and south walls feature the miniature Buddhas. Traces of the History of Buddhism can be seen in the middle portion of these walls. Above the entrance of the east wall are portraits of Akṣobhya, Maitreya Bodhisattva etc. drawn during the Five Dynasties.

### **Cave No. 324**

**Period of Construction:** Renovated during Western Xia.

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling has floral designs with the four slopes also showing floral designs. The ceiling of the niche on the south wall shows floral designs. The top portion of the west wall is covered by decorative hangings and the middle portion displays a preaching scene. This cave is north-facing.

### **Cave No. 325**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre, with three layers of border designs of rhombus and four-petalled flowers. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall shows floral designs with four-petalled flowers on the four slopes. The top portions of the east and west walls have decorative hangings, the middle layer a preaching scene and the bottom layer has a flask shaped entrance with precious offerings painted on the inner side. This cave is south-facing and is positioned on the north wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 323.

### **Cave No. 326**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs; two slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls have each five alms-offering bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling has the cross-cudgel designs, the four slopes are painted with round petalled flowers, circular lines and garlands and hanging curtains, chess-board and floral designs. The niche on the west wall shows three standing Buddhas. Painted on the top portion of the north and south walls are decorative hangings, the middle portion shows a preaching scene and below is shown a flask-like entrance with precious offerings painted on the inner side. Above the entrance of the east wall are drawn decorative hangings and a preaching scene is shown below. The north and south sides of the entrance have a bodhisattva each.

#### **Cave No. 327**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (the stucco statues being redone in Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The south side of the entrance of the west wall illustrates the Sūtra for Mañjuśrī.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows carvings of coiled dragons, lotus flowers and circular lines. The four slopes are covered by chess-board patterns with floral designs, circular lines, floral motifs, decorative hangings and flying figures. The niche on the west wall shelters the statues of seven Buddhas and four bodhisattvas, two statues of bodhisattvas cast in Tang brought from elsewhere and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas; below these is shown a flask-like entrance, the inner side of which shows precious offerings. The north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are painted with miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 328**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows citron fruit designs. Above the entrance of the west wall is a preaching scene (blurred) drawn during Western Xia. To the north and south of the entrance and on the surface layer are all paintings drawn during Western Xia which have become blurred. The lower layer has a scene of the Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north wall has portraits of devarājas painted in the Five Dynasties;.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows chess-board patterns and floral designs; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. Both the north and south walls have three bodhisattvas each drawn during Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows the cross-cudgel and lotus designs; the four slopes have the circular lines and floral motifs, the chess-board and floral patterns. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and bodhisattvas carved in Early Tang. Outside the niche, on the platform are two bodhisattva statues one on each side, below the niche and platform is a painting showing the vessels for worship and ten bodhisattvas drawn during Western Xia. The top portions of the north and south walls show the decorative hangings, the middle portion illustrates the Sukhāvati Sūtra and the lower one shows a flask shaped entrance, the inner side of which reveals precious offerings. The western end has a depiction of a bodhisattva drawn during Western Xia; flowers are drawn at the lower level. The Sukhāvati Sūtra drawn during Western Xia is illustrated above the entrance of the east wall; to the north and south of the



entrance are seven bodhisattvas drawn in Western Xia; the lower level shows a flask-like entrance, inside are precious offerings.

### **Cave No. 329**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling features the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtras of Amoghapāśa, the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the west wall is inscribed an invocation flanked by the figures of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon on either side. On the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of eight Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha. Traces of the figures of disciples and bodhisattvas are seen on the north and south walls.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has a narrative painting in the centre; the north and south slopes are adorned with five cross-legged sitting Buddhas each drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall features three donor bhikṣus and the north wall a male donor, both drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling depicts lotus and flying figures. The four slopes are covered by decorative hangings, three musicians and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra, portraits of three bhikṣuṇīs and twenty-three female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties are seen below. The north wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra (two sections of the painting had been looted by an American); shown below are the portraits of seventeen male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. Four preaching scenes decorate the space above the entrance on the east wall. On the south side is a preaching scene with one each of female and male donors. Below are drawn donor ox carts and female donors. On the north side of the entrance is a preaching scene; below it are horses and male donors.

### **Cave No. 330**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (statues being redone during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows a damaged painting. The north walls features a devarāja drawn during Western Xia.

**Corridor:** Paintings of Western Xia on the ceiling are damaged, only fragments remain.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral designs. The east slope has floral motifs, cloud designs and precious pearl patterns. The west wall bears statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two disciples cast in Western Xia and repaired in Qing. The north, south and west walls each display a preaching scene; above the entrance of the east wall are painted the utensils used for worship. The north and south sides of the entrance are painted with flowering trees.

### **Cave No. 331**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling features three preaching scenes drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the west wall are the portraits of Kṣitigarbha Rāja and “Moon-and-Water” Avalokiteśvara also drawn during the Five Dynasties. Both the north and south sides of the entrance depict the eight categories of supernatural beings. Both these depictions are blurred with the one on the south side having been stolen by an American. The north and south walls have portraits of devarājas drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling displays an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara in the centre drawn in the Five Dynasties. Both the north and south slopes have six cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The surface layer of the north and south walls shows donor figures drawn during the Five Dynasties; the lower portion features devarājas drawn during Early Tang.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows peony flowers; the four slopes exhibit miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings; the top portions of the east and south slopes of the ceiling show three flying figures each. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas, two devarājas cast in Early Tang and repaired in Qing, two statues of bodhisattvas carved in Qing. The south wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra, below it are nineteen female donors and twenty-seven female attendants. The north wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra; below it are the male donors. An illustration of the Saddharma-puṣṭaka Sūtra is seen above the entrance of the east wall. On the north and south sides of the entrance are preaching scenes; the lower portion displays the donor ox carts.

### Cave No. 332

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows portraits of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn during the Five Dynasties. Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha are shown on the north and south sides of the entrance. The north and south walls feature disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas (blurred).

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows portrait of a six-armed Avalokiteśvara in the centre. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The south wall illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties, below this sūtra illustration are portraits of three donors and two attendants drawn during Yuan and three donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north wall illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties; below it are two female donors and one attendant drawn in Yuan and three donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing side of the central column contains statues of a Buddha and two standing bodhisattvas; painted on the top portion are the figures of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. A portrait of Vairocana Buddha is seen on the south-facing side of the column while the west-facing side shows that of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and finally the north-facing side features a preaching scene on Mount Gṛdhrakāta. The front portion on the east slope of the ceiling depicts miniature Buddhas, the middle portion of the west slope has a painting of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna and the north and south slopes have miniature Buddhas. The rear portion also reveals miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall houses statues of the Nirvāṇa Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The ceiling of the niche shows flying figures and whirling forests. The front portion of the south wall shows a Buddha statue and a set of standing bodhisattvas. The top portion of the south wall has two paintings showing Buddha attending sermon. The rear portion illustrates the Nirvāṇa-Sūtra; the female donors are seen at a lower level. The

front portion of the north wall has the same features as the front portion of the south wall. The rear portion has illustration of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* with the male donors below. Above the entrance of the east wall is Avalokiteśvara of Mount Potalaka. On the south side of the entrance are fifty bodhisattvas; below them are three donor bhikṣus; on the north side is featured a sermon at Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa; below it are three donor bhikṣus; along the entrance are the portraits of two bodhisattvas drawn in the Five Dynasties. This cave was renovated in the first year of Wuzhou Shengli Era (698). A tablet stating its history has been removed from this cave.

### Cave No. 333

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The surface layer of the west slope of the ceiling shows a damaged painting drawn during Song; the lower level has another damaged painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. To the north of the entrance on the west wall is a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has a lotus design in the centre with the four slopes showing the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The west wall has a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Along the throne are figures of male and female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall features figures of six bodhisattvas and one disciple with five male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north wall has similar paintings with the difference in the number of female donors, also drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas, to the south is a disciple figure along with eight male and female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties; the north side shows a disciple and nine female and male donors.

### Cave No. 334

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties. The north side of the entrance illustrates the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* showing Vimalakīrti and the south side shows Mañjuśrī from the same sūtra. The south wall illustrates the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra* drawn during the Five Dynasties; the west side shows the twelve great vows. The north wall illustrates the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra* with the sixteen meditations illustrated at the west end.

**Corridor:** On the ceiling is painted legendary stories prevailing in the Five Dynasties such as Vaaiśravana churning the sea etc. The lower layer shows miniature Buddhas drawn during Early Tang; both the north and south slopes feature the auspicious symbols drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls of the corridor have female and male donors respectively drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has coiled dragon designs in the centre. The four slopes have floral motifs and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas cast in Early Tang. Outside the niche on the north and south sides of the platform are statues of heavenly beast. On the ceiling of the niche is a preaching scene. The top portion of the south wall displays miniature Buddhas, the middle portion the *Sukhāvati-Sūtra* and lower portion the female donors. The top portion of the north wall shows miniature Buddha figures, Amitābha Sūtrain the middle and male donors at the bottom. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of eleven-

headed Avalokiteśvara flanked by two bodhisattvas on each side; on the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas; the north side shows donor horse carriages below and the south side shows donor ox-carts.

### **Cave No. 335**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, Song, Yuan and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of ceiling features a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara flanked by the portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara on both sides. Above the entrance of west wall is a portion of a damaged painting drawn during Song. On the north and south sides of the entrance is illustrated the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. The two corners of the south wall reveal damaged paintings drawn during Middle Tang and Song. The centre of the wall is the entrance to Cave No. 336. The north wall features a damaged painting in a corner drawn in Song. *Corridor:* The ceiling shows Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha drawn in Middle Tang. The south wall features a donor bhikṣu and the north wall a preaching scene, both these are drawn in Middle Tang. The lower portion of the north wall is the entrance to Cave No. 337.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows peony flowers in the centre; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and a disciple cast in Tang and statues of a disciple and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The west wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra; the north wall features the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is the portrait of Amitābha Buddha. Five preaching scenes, the Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and a portion of miniature Buddhas are seen on the south side of the entrance. The north side has a preaching scene drawn during Middle Tang and below it are the figures of four bodhisattvas painted in Yuan. This cave has three inscriptions: one dated year 686 above the entrance, the second on the west wall dated 703, the third noting its being rebuilt in the Shengli Era(698-9) by Zhang Siyi.

### **Cave No. 336**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and floral motifs. The south, east and west slopes feature miniature Buddhas. The south wall has a portrait of Avalokiteśvara, the west wall of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara, the east wall of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. This cave is on the south wall of the ante-room of Cave No. 335 and is south-facing.

### **Cave No. 337**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The ceiling has coiled-dragon and floral designs in the centre. The four slopes show the floral motifs and decorative hangings. A corner of the east slope has miniature Buddhas; the north, south and west slopes feature miniature Buddhas with a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre. The ceiling of the niche on the north wall is painted with miniature Buddhas. The west wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru on the north side and sixteen meditations on the south side. The east wall illustrates

the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with a depiction of nine inauspicious deaths on the south side and twelve great vows on the north side.

**Cave No. 338**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Late Tang and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows miniature Buddhas drawn during Early Tang, a portion was later supplemented during Late Tang. Above the entrance of the west wall is a portrait of eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara drawn during Late Tang flanked by scenes of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon on either side. On the north and south sides of the entrance are devarājas drawn in Late Tang. The south and north walls feature the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with a bowl in each hand respectively.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra. The north and south slopes have each a set of five cross-legged sitting Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas. The north and south walls feature male donors, one on the north wall and three on the south wall, the north wall also shows two donor bhikṣus. All the paintings in the corridor are drawn in Late Tang.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral designs, the four slopes are adorned with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings in the corners. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a sitting Buddha cast in Late Tang and statues two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north and south walls display miniature Buddhas with preaching scene in the centre; below are portraits of bodhisattvas and donors drawn in Late Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene. On the south and north sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas; below them are male and female donors drawn in Late Tang.

**Cave No. 339**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas painted during the Five Dynasties with a preaching scene in the centre. Above the entrance on the west wall is inscribed an invocation; on the south side of the entrance is a portrait of devarāja and the north side has a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa both drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall features a portrait of Mañjuśrī while the north wall has one of Samantabhadra, both drawn in Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre drawn during Western Xia. The north and south walls feature two bodhisattvas each.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows floral designs; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of two Buddhas and two disciples cast in Qing. The south and north walls feature miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The lower portion of the south wall has portraits of male donors and that of the north wall shows figures of female donors, both drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance and on the south and north sides of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 340**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Middle and Late Tang and Yuan and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. To the south and north of the entrance are the preaching scenes; below these scenes are Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha. The south wall is partially covered by damaged figures of bodhisattvas and disciples.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows traces of the history of Buddhism; the south slope has seven auspicious symbols and the north slope features six auspicious symbols both drawn in Late Tang. The north and south walls feature damaged portraits of a female donor and donor bhikṣu respectively, both these are drawn in Late Tang.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs. The four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang and statues of two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north and south walls are covered by miniature Buddhas with an illustration of the Sukhāvati-Sūtra in the centre. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and six bodhisattvas drawn during Early Tang. On the south side of the entrance are painted two standing Buddhas, a bodhisattva and ten miniature Buddhas; below these are portraits of miniature Buddhas drawn during Late Tang; paintings of three Buddhas and three cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn in Yuan, to the north of the entrance paintings of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas drawn during Yuan; below it is a painting of two bodhisattvas drawn during Middle Tang.

#### **Cave No. 341**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows three illustrations of Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties; above the entrance of the west wall is inscribed an invocation. The north and south sides of the entrance show the scene of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. The north wall has a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties, at the lower layer are miniature Buddhas drawn during Tang.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has a portrait of the three-headed and six-armed Avalokiteśvara; the north and south slopes have four standing Buddhas each drawn during the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls feature female and male donors respectively, both drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows floral designs and floating clouds in the centre; the four slopes having decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra respectively. The top portion of the east wall shows preaching scene drawn during Early Tang flanked by portraits of eight-armed Avalokiteśvara and bodhisattvas. Above the entrance is a picture of Buddha preaching the dharma drawn during Early Tang flanked by eight-armed Avalokiteśvara and five bodhisattvas. Above the entrance is a flying figure; to the north and south of the entrance are preaching scenes, all these are drawn during the Five Dynasties; seen at a lower level are male donors on the south side and female donors and two attendants on the north side.

#### **Cave No. 342**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows traces of paintings of Buddhist history; the north and south slopes feature auspicious symbols drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs drawn during Early Tang; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas drawn during Early Tang. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of Buddha cast in Early Tang, statues of disciples and fourteen bodhisattvas repaired in Qing. The fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa is illustrated on the south wall; the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra is illustrated on the north wall; below it are bodhisattvas. The theme of the painting above the entrance on the east wall is not clear. The south and north sides of the entrance on the east wall illustrate the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra; below it are donors drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 343**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** The centre of the ceiling in the main hall shows floral designs and parrots; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The east wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the north and the sixteen meditations to the south respectively. The north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with the twelve great vows to the south and nine inauspicious deaths to the north respectively.

#### **Cave No. 344**

**Period of Construction:** Tang (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The top portion of the north wall shows decorative hangings and the Sukhāvātī Sūtra; below these are precious offerings.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling features coiled dragons; the four slopes are painted with circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board patterns, decorative hangings and flying figures. The niche on the west wall contains statue of issue-giving goddess cast in Qing, rockery and pavilions. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas; at a lower level are precious offerings. Above the entrance and on the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas; below these on each side are shown precious offerings.

#### **Cave No. 345**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling has four of the seven Buddhas drawn in the Five Dynasties. The west wall is partially covered by decorative hangings drawn in the Five Dynasties. The south wall is Cave No. 346.

**Corridor:** The ceiling displays history of Khotan Buddhism drawn in High Tang. The north and south walls feature hanging curtains and three donor bhikṣus respectively, both drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows coiled dragon and round petalled lotus flowers. The four slopes show circular lines, floral motifs, chess-board with floral designs and flyin figures. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha and a disciple cast in High Tang and of a disciple and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north and south walls feature the miniature Buddhas. The west portion of each wall shows halo and flower patterns. Above the entrance and on the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 346**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The south wall features a portrait of an archer drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 347**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The north side of the entrance on the west wall shows a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north wall features devarājas also drawn in the Five Dynasties. Below them are female donors.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows chess-board patterns and floral designs. The south wall is the entrance of Cave No. 348. To the west of the entrance is a damaged painting of bodhisattva drawn in Western Xia. The north wall is the entrance of Cave No. 349 and to the west of the entrance is a damaged painting of bodhisattva drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows coiled dragons; the four slopes are covered by chess-board patterns, floral designs and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples cast in Tang and statues of four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north, south and east walls are painted with portraits of miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 348**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs as the central painting; the east and west slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The east and west walls feature lotus flowers which are blurred and black due to fumigation.

**Main Hall:** The centre and the four slopes of the caisson ceiling show floral designs. The north wall of the niche on the south wall shows two disciples which are black due to fumigation. The east and west walls feature a preaching scene each.

#### **Cave No. 349**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Western Xia).



**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs as the central painting; the east and the west slopes are covered by decorative hangings which are black and blurred. The east and west walls feature lotus flowers.

**Main Hall:** The four slopes of the ceiling are covered by floral designs. The north and west walls have light of Buddha and flowers; the south end of the west wall reveals a portrait of bodhisattva. The south wall also has floral designs.

#### **Cave No. 350**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows floral designs; the four slopes have circular lines and floral motifs. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of monk Zhao Gongming cast in Qing. The south and north walls have a preaching scene each. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene and on the north side is a damaged painting of a bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 351**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The surface layer of the ceiling depicts citron designs while the lower layer shows a damaged painting of the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the west wall are portraits of seven Buddhas. The south and north sides of the entrance illustrate the Sūtras of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively. The north and south walls illustrate the Amitābha Sūtra individually.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has chess-board patterns and floral designs as the central painting. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The top portion of the north and south walls shows preaching scenes; the middle portion features alms-offering bodhisattvas; at the lower level are drawn precious offerings inside a flask shaped entrance.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows a dragon playing with pearl. Circular lines, floral motifs, decorative hangings and chess-board floral designs cover the four slopes. The niche on the west wall displays a painting of Buddha drawn during Qing. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas, below these miniature portraits are precious offerings inside a flask shaped entrance; the west end of each wall has a portrait of alms-offering bodhisattva and flowers. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas; on the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas; below these are precious offerings drawn inside flask shaped entrance.

#### **Cave No. 352**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows floral designs, circular lines and decorative hangings on the four slopes. The west wall niche contains statues of Bodhisattva Maitreya and attending bodhisattvas. The north wall features damaged portraits of six bodhisattvas and south wall features damaged portraits of two bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 353**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows dharma-cakra, and the four slopes are covered by floral designs, circular lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings, the chess-board and floral designs, decorative hangings and a set of six flying figures. The west wall niche contains a statue of a bodhisattva cast in High Tang and six statues of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha cast in Qing. The niche of the north wall contains a set of five Buddha statues cast in Qing. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of a bodhisattva, the north and south sides of the entrance each have four bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 354**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall has floral designs; the four slopes have decorative hangings and floral motifs. The centre of the ceiling of the niche on the west wall depicts two floral designs; and the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra. On the south side of the entrance on the east wall is a portrait of the Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara while the north side has the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 355**

**Period of Construction:** Song (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall contains a statue of a meditating Buddha cast in Western Wei. The north and south walls have depictions of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara respectively.

#### **Cave No. 356**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling of the main hall shows lotus flowers; the south, east and west slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The north and the south walls feature miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. Miniature Buddhas adorn the north side of the entrance on the east wall.

#### **Cave No. 357**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** There is statue of a meditating monk cast in Middle Tang.

#### **Cave No. 358**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On the lower layer above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during Middle Tang. The lower layer of the south side of the entrance has a portrait of Virūdhaka drawn during Middle Tang, the lower layer of the north side entrance has a painting of Vaiśravaṇa.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral patterns. The north and south walls feature two bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and round petalled lotus in the centre. The four slopes are covered by decorative hangings, floral motifs and flying figures. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a bodhisattva and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. On the south wall from west-eastwards are the illustrations of Amitāyus-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra with donor figures drawn during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Western Xia at the lower level. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra and the lower portion is the same as the south wall. Above the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene, to the south and north of the entrance are portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara respectively.

### Cave No. 359

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a portrait of eight-armed Avalokiteśvara drawn in the Five Dynasties; the north and south walls display damaged paintings in a corner drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows a lion and lotus flower; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and floral motifs. On the upper portion of the west slope is a painting of Buddha attending sermon and below this are seen Garuḍa and Kalaviṅka. The north, south and east slopes feature miniature Buddhas with preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains statues of bodhisattvas cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of the Amitābha-Sūtra and Vajracchedikā-Sūtra; below these fifteen female donors. On the north wall from west to east are illustrated Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra; below these are thirteen male donors in Tibetan costume. Above the entrance on the east wall is inscribed an invocation along with a male and female donor. The south and north sides illustrate Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively; below these are male and female donors.

### Cave No. 360

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling shows a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance on the west wall are decorative hangings and an invocation which is inscribed during the Five Dynasties. To the south and north of the entrance are Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha also drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north wall features a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene; the north and south walls also feature preaching scene; all these are drawn in the Five Dynasties. Below it are three male donors.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows kalaviṅka, round petalled lotus flower in the centre. The four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and floral motifs. The west slope features miniature Buddhas with Śākyamuni preaching the dharma in the centre; the south, north and east slopes have miniature Buddhas with the stūpa of Prabhūtaratna in the centre. The west wall niche contains statues of a

bodhisattva and two disciples cast in Qing. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of Śākya mandala, Amitāyus-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra, below each of these is a screen having scenes on the panels. West to east on the north wall are portraits of the thousand-armed and thousand-bowled Mañjuśrī, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Devatā-Sūtra. Screens with paintings are shown below each of the illustrations. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of the contents from Mañjuśrī-Sūtra. On the south and north sides of the entrance are illustrations of Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra showing Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī respectively.

#### **Cave No. 361**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** Remnants of painting on the ceiling.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has crossbeams and lotus designs. Floral motifs, vajra cudgel and decorative hangings cover the four slopes. Preaching scenes, Buddhas of ten directions attending sermons cover the west slope. The north, south and east slopes show four flying figures each on the top portion, miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre in the middle portion. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows garlands and hanging curtains and chess-board and floral designs; the four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas. On the south of the niche is the painting of incarnation of Samantabhadra on Mount Emei, while on its north is the same of Mañjuśrī on Mount Wutai. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of the Amitābha-Sūtra and Vajracchedikā-Sūtra. On the north wall from west to east are illustrations of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait showing Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna. The south side of the entrance illustrates the Sūtra of thousand-armed and thousand-bowled Mañjuśrī. The middle portion has a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara; below it is a painting of female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. On the north side of the entrance is a portrait of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara.

#### **Cave No. 362**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The murals of this cave are destroyed.

#### **Cave No. 363**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows four-petalled flowers as the central painting; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north and south walls feature a wandering monk.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the ceiling shows coiled dragons and the four slopes have floral designs and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas cast in Middle Tang and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The south and north walls illustrate the Sukhāvātī-Sūtra with donor figures shown below. Above the entrance of the east wall are portraits of seven Buddhas. The south and north sides of the entrance have a portrait each of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha; at a lower level are male and female donors.

**Cave No. 364**

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling has a design of cross-cudgels. On the north side of the entrance on the west wall are devarājas while the south side has a damaged painting. The north and south walls feature flying figures and attendants.

**Cave No. 365**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Portraits of two devarājas are seen on both the north and south sides of the entrance on the west wall.

**Corridor:** Both the north and south walls display damaged alms-offering bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling has floral designs and above the platform on the west wall is a set of seven statues of meditating Buddhas cast in Middle Tang. The upper portion of the wall shows a canopy of bodhi-ratna and Buddha light drawn during Middle Tang. The upper portion of the north and south walls illustrates the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra. The upper portion of the east wall shows decorative hangings and seen above the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene. The south and north sides of the entrance illustrate the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra.

**Cave No. 366**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows a round phoenix; the north, south and east slopes are painted with floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of Jade Emperor. The top portion of the north and south walls features decorative hangings, the middle portion features bodhisattvas and the lower portion the precious offerings. Above the entrance on the east wall are decorative hangings, illustration of the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra on the south side and Samantabhadra-Sūtra on the north side of the entrance.

**Cave No. 367**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall has a round phoenix, the four slopes are covered by circular lines, floral motifs and floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha and two disciples cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The top portion of the north and south walls shows decorative hangings; the middle portion illustrates Sukhāvatī Sūtra and preaching scenes. The top portion of the east wall features decorative hangings in a row. Above the entrance and on the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are preaching scenes.

**Cave No. 368**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling of the main hall shows coiled dragon, and the four slopes show circular lines, floral motifs, and chess-board and floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of a sitting Buddha cast in High Tang, statues of bodhisattvas and devarājas cast in Song, statues of Ānanda and Kāśyapa cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The top portion of the north, south and east walls features decorative hangings; the north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvātī Sūtra in the middle portion, and four sermon attending bodhisattvas at the west end; precious offerings are painted below. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna and preaching scenes are drawn on the north and south sides of the entrance.

#### **Cave No. 369**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Fragments of paintings of the Five Dynasties on the north and south walls.

**Corridor:** Same as ante-room.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows round petalled lotus, coiled dragon and four parrots. The four slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas with the preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall contains a set of five Buddha statues cast in Qing. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī painted in the Five Dynasties figure on the south and north sides of the curtains at the opening of the niche. On the south wall from west to east are illustrations of the Vajracchedikā-Sūtra and Amitābha-Sūtra; below these illustrations are a screen and seven bodhisattvas drawn during the Five Dynasties. West-eastwards on the north wall are illustrated the Maitreya-Sūtra and Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; below this is a screen and six bodhisattvas drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting on the chapter of Buddhhaloka from Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. On the north and south sides of the entrance are illustrations of Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra, one wall featuring Vimalakīrti and the other wall featuring Mañjuśrī.

#### **Cave No. 370**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** A sitting Buddha in the centre of the ceiling with fragments of Buddha on the northern and southern slopes.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows crossed cudgels and lotus flowers. The four slopes are covered with floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas with a sitting Buddha in the centre. The west wall niche contains a statue of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha cast in Qing. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī painted in the Five Dynasties figure on the south and north sides of the curtains at the opening of the niche. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra flanked by Ajātaśatru and the sixteen meditations. The north wall illustrates Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra with nine inauspicious deaths and twelve great vows on its east and west sides. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene drawn during Song, the south and north sides of the entrance have a portrait of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara drawn during Middle Tang.

#### **Cave No. 371**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in High Tang and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A corner of the east and west slopes of the ceiling displays miniature Buddhas. Above the entrance of the west wall are portraits of seven Buddhas and seven attending bodhisattvas. To the north and south of the entrance is a preaching scene. The top layer of the south wall features a preaching scene, the lower layer features miniature Buddhas. The top and bottom layers of the north wall show preaching scenes. To the north and south of the entrance on the east wall are bodhisattvas.

**Corridor:** The north wall features a damaged painting.

**Main Hall:** The east and west slopes of the ceiling feature miniature Buddhas. Above the entrance on the west wall are the portraits of seven Buddhas, seven attending bodhisattvas. On the north and south sides is a preaching scene each, sitting Buddha cast in High Tang and statues two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The top portion of the south wall shows a portrait of Avalokiteśvara preaching dharma; preaching scenes are shown below on the east side; in the middle is a halo and on the west side is a painting of a bodhisattva. The top portion of the north wall has the illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra; the rest is similar to the south wall excepting for a row of donors at the lower layer. Above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas; to the north and south of the entrance are paintings of bodhisattvas and attending bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 372**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra drawn during Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a preaching scene drawn during Song; the north and south walls have damaged paintings of bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows floral designs in the centre with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas on the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains a set of five statues cast in Qing. The south and north walls illustrate the Amitābha-Sūtra and preaching scene respectively. On the south side of the entrance on the east wall are portraits of Kṣitigarbha Rāja and a sitting Buddha; the north side of the entrance has portraits of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and a female donor.

#### **Cave No. 373**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling shows pomegranate and lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, Kāśyapa cast in Tang and statues of a disciple and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre; bodhisattvas are seen below. Further below on the north wall are the portraits of female donors drawn during Early Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall are figures of seven Buddhas and two bodhisattvas. The south and north sides of the entrance have two devarājas each. Below the devarājas on the south side are alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn during Song.

#### **Cave No. 374**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The ceiling shows traces of a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows a lotus flower while the four slopes show floral motifs, miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha, two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The south and north walls have a preaching scene each. A preaching scene drawn during the Five Dynasties is seen above the entrance of the east wall while on the south and north sides are the portraits of Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa respectively drawn during the Five Dynasties. Below the portrait of Vaiśravaṇa are female donors and two attendants.

#### **Cave No. 375**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** *Ante-room:* A corner of the west slope of the ceiling reveals a painting drawn during the Five Dynasties. An invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties is above the entrance on the west wall. On the north side is a scene showing Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha. Both the north and south walls are partially covered by paintings drawn during the Five Dynasties.

*Corridor:* The centre of the ceiling shows a portrait of Kṣitigarbha with ten kings of hell; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The south wall of the corridor illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra drawn during Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows pomegranates and lotus flower designs. The four slopes are painted with the decorative hangings, ten flying musicians and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas with the preaching scene in the centre; below miniature Buddhas on the south wall are eleven female donors and twelve attendants. The lower portion of the north wall features fourteen male donors and fourteen attendants. Miniature Buddhas cover the space above the entrance of the east wall, on the south and north sides of the entrance are two devarājas; below on the north side are the figures of three female donors, bhikṣuṇī and two attendants while the south side shows donors drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 376**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows flower clusters in the centre. Circular lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings are seen on the four slopes. The niche on the west wall contains statues of seven Buddhas cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. Both the north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvatī Sūtra, five precious offerings in the bottle-shaped door are below. The lower layer of east wall features miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui; on the south side of the entrance is a preaching Buddha and below it in the bottle shaped door are precious offerings. On the north side of the entrance is a preaching Buddha; below it are two precious offerings in the bottle-shaped door.

#### **Cave No. 377**

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.



**Contents:** There are fragments of a portrait of six-armed Avalokiteśvara on the west wall, the north and south walls feature damaged paintings; that of the north wall is a bodhisattva. This cave is placed between Cave Nos. 378 and 376.

#### **Cave No. 378**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall has floral designs; the four slopes are painted with circular lines, floral motifs and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples cast in Sui and two bodhisattva statues cast in Qing and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne. The north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra; seen below in the painted narrow doorway are eleven precious offerings. Above the entrance and on the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are illustrations of the Sukhāvatī-Sūtra, below this precious offerings are painted in the bottle- shaped door.

#### **Cave No. 379**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during High and Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling features portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara. Above the entrance of the west wall are bodhisattvas and an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties. Portrait of Virūdhaka drawn during the Five Dynasties is on the south side of the entrance while at the lower level are female donors. To the north of the entrance is a portrait of Vaiśravaṇa drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall illustrates Mañjuśrī-Sūtra drawn during the Five Dynasties; below it are female donors. The north wall features a damaged painting in a corner drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling exhibits lotus flowers and Aupapādakas born out of lotus. The four slopes are painted with the decorative hangings, a set of twelve dancing and flying figures and miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples cast in Sui and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The south wall illustrates Amitāyus-Sūtra drawn during High Tang flanked by Ajātaśatru and the sixteen meditations on the west and east respectively. Below are portraits of eighteen donors drawn during Middle Tang. The north wall is covered by miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene in the centre drawn during Sui; at a lower level are the figures of eight bodhisattvas, further below are a donor bhikṣu, eleven male and seven female donors. Miniature Buddhas painted during Sui are shown above the entrance of the east wall, to the south of the entrance are portraits of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva drawn during Middle Tang, floral designs and two male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties; on the north side of the entrance are two portraits of a bodhisattva drawn during High Tang and the Five Dynasties, two female donors drawn during High Tang and four male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 380**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The south side of the entrance on the west wall illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra, the north side illustrates the Mañjuśrī Sūtra both drawn during Song. The north and south walls feature paintings drawn during Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has the portrait of Kṣitigarbha with the ten kings of hell in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The south wall is decorated by a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara drawn during Song; below these are donors. The north wall has a portrait of the thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with thousand bowls drawn in Song; below it are donors.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows four cross-legged bodhisattvas, musicians, clouds, lotuses and precious gems. The four slopes are painted with the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui dynasty. The top portion of the south wall shows seven flying figures, celestial mansions, decorative hangings and three rows of miniature Buddhas; the middle portion has a preaching scene, the lower portion has three donor bhikṣunīs and two female donors. The top portion of the north wall is painted with the figures of seven musicians and flying figures, celestial mansions, decorative hangings and three rows of miniature Buddhas, the middle portion has a fire spitting dragon and at a lower level are five donor bhikṣus and five male donors. The upper portion of the east wall shows six flying figures, celestial mansions, decorative hangings. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene. Above the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas, a devarāja in the middle portion and female donors four and six respectively at the lower portion painted during Song.

#### **Cave No. 381**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling design in the main hall shows lotus flowers in the centre, the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and eight flying figures. Miniature Buddhas and Aupapādakas are drawn on the north, west and south slopes, the east slope features only miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples and bodhisattvas cast in Early Tang. The south wall features miniature Buddhas, a preaching scene in the middle portion and portraits of a bhikṣu and nine male donors below. The north wall has the same features as the south wall but at the lower level are seven female donors and one bhikṣunī. Above the south side of the entrance on the east wall are portraits of a meditating bodhisattva, a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva and a disciple, the middle portion shows a portrait of devarāja and at the bottom are four female donors. Above the north side are portraits of a meditating bodhisattva, a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva and a disciple, the middle portion has a portrait of devarāja and at the bottom are four male donors.

#### **Cave No. 382**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows cross-beams. Floral designs decorate the four slopes. The west wall has a Buddha statue cast in Qing. The top portion of the wall is covered by decorative hangings; the middle portion shows a preaching scene. The top portions of the north and south walls are painted with decorative hangings and the middle portion a bodhisattva. Decorative hangings are seen above the entrance of the east wall, to the north is a bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 383**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song, Western Xia and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The north and south walls of the ceiling feature paintings drawn during Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and lotus flower designs; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The niche on the south wall contains statue of a cross-legged bodhisattva cast in Sui; statues of two bodhisattvas cast in High Tang. Miniature Buddhas cover the space above the entrance of the east wall, on the north and the south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas drawn during Sui; the south side has donor horse carts, a bodhisattva and an *Aupapādaka* drawn during Song; at a lower level on the north side are four female donors and a bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 384**

**Period of Construction:** High and Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The east and west slopes of the ceiling feature miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang. Above the entrance on the west wall is preaching Buddha drawn during Middle Tang; the north and south sides of the entrance feature a bodhisattva and two male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south side has a portrait of *Virūdhaka* drawn during Middle Tang. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang; the east end of the north wall illustrates the *Samantabhadra-Sūtra*.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows *Kṣitigarbha* and the ten kings of hell drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall illustrates *Maitreya-Sūtra*; below it is a male donor drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has floral designs in the centre. The four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas drawn during High Tang. The niche on the west wall contains statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two bodhisattvas cast in High Tang. The niches on the north and south walls shelter statues of Buddha and two bodhisattvas each, the statue of the Buddha in the niche on the south wall is leaning while that in the niche on the north wall is cross-legged. There is six-armed *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara* on the south wall painted in Middle Tang by the side of the niche, and a six-armed *Cintamaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara* of the same vintage and position on the north wall. Above the entrance of east wall are the portraits of seven Buddhas drawn during Middle Tang; on the south side of the entrance are portraits of two bodhisattvas. On the north side is a portrait of *Vaiṣravaṇa* of northern direction. There is tantric influence in this cave.

#### **Cave No. 385**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** The ceiling shows floral patterns. The west wall has a statue of bodhisattva in *ardha-padmāsana*. The north and south walls have each a portrait of bodhisattva.

#### **Cave No. 386**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is a painting; to the south and north of the entrance is a *devarāja* and a painting respectively, all are drawn during the Five Dynasties. The south wall features *devarāja* with a soldier in hell painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows partially damaged painting drawn in Middle Tang. The north and south walls feature portraits of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara also drawn during Middle Tang.

**Main Hall:** The centre of caisson ceiling shows lotus flower; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and eight flying figures and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of cross-legged sitting Buddha with two disciples and four bodhisattvas. On the upper portion of the south wall are miniature Buddhas; in the middle portion an illustration of Amitābha Sūtra and Maitreya Sūtra west-eastwards drawn in Middle Tang; nine bhikṣus and precious offerings at the bottom. On the upper portion of the north wall are miniature Buddhas from Early Tang and the Five Dynasties. The middle portion illustrates sūtras. West-eastwards are the Devatā-Sūtra and Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra both drawn during Middle Tang, below these are six donor bhikṣus, two Śrāmaṇeras, and various precious things. Above the entrance of the east wall is the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, to the south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas drawn in Early Tang, the middle portion illustrates the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra drawn during Middle Tang, below it are a donor bhikṣu and a Śrāmaṇera, above the north side of the entrance are miniature Buddhas drawn in the Five Dynasties, the middle section illustrates the Samantabhadra-Sūtra; below it are four donors and two bhikṣus; both these are drawn in Middle Tang.

#### Cave No. 387

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has three flying figures. Above the entrance on the west wall are portraits of seven Buddhas; to the north and south of the entrance are Vaiśravaṇa and Virūdhaka. The south wall features Kṣitigarbha. All the paintings are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling displays a preaching scene. The north and south walls have portraits of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara respectively.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows pomegranate and floral motifs in the centre; on the four slopes are the decorative hangings, flying figures and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas in *ardha-padmāsana* and two bodhisattvas cast in High Tang. The south wall shows a sūtra illustration; painted on the east and west sides are miniature Buddhas, below these figures are two female donors drawn during the Five Dynasties and six male donors drawn in High Tang. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene; below it are three donor bhikṣus, the south and north sides of the entrance are covered by miniature Buddhas; below them are female and male donors drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### Cave No. 388

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling and the north walls have damaged paintings. Above the entrance of the west wall are drawings painted in the Five Dynasties; to the south of the entrance is a *devarāja* and to the north is *Vaiśravaṇa* of the northern direction. The south wall has an illustration of the *Samantabhadra-Sūtra* which is partially damaged.

**Corridor:** The ceiling displays an eleven-headed *Avalokiteśvara* drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south walls feature portraits of the *Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara* and *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara* respectively.

**Main Hall:** A lotus flower design is in the centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall, the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings, flying figures and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of one cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas; at the lower level are the *yakṣas*. Miniature Buddhas cover the space above the entrance, the south and north sides of the entrance of the east wall.

### Cave No. 389

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall and to the north of the entrance are damaged paintings drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties. Both the north and south walls have portraits of bodhisattva.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling features lotus flowers; the four slopes have the decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui. Miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the middle cover the south wall; below them are female donors and *yakṣas*. Above the entrance and on the north and south sides of the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas. On the south side at a lower level in a corner are the *yakṣas* and donor ox cart, on the north side a herd of horses and a *yakṣa*.

### Cave No. 390

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is an invocation of the Five Dynasties, on both sides are scenes of *Vaiśravaṇa* attending sermon; above the south side of the entrance is a damaged mural of *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara*; the middle portion illustrates the *Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness*; below it are donors (faded). In the middle portion to the north of the entrance is illustrated the *Amitābha-Sūtra* (faded); along the entrance are fragments of miniature Buddhas. The north and south walls feature *Ānanda* and bodhisattvas (both have only their heads remaining) and disciples and donors respectively, all drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows *Kṣitigarbha* and the ten kings of hell drawn in the Five Dynasties; the middle portion is inscribed with an account written by monk Daoming. The north and south walls illustrate the *Mañjuśrī-Sūtra* and the *Samantabhadra-Sūtra* respectively; below the illustrations are blurred impressions of donors. All these are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** Lotus flowers are painted in the centre of the caisson ceiling; the four slopes are covered by garlands and hanging curtains, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall has statues of a sitting bodhisattva, two angels and four standing bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The top portion of the south wall shows ten dancing and flying figures, celestial mansions, fifteen sitting Buddhas; the middle portion exhibits a sitting bodhisattva, the two sides show eighteen cross-legged sitting Buddhas, below these figures are twenty-six female donors and thirty-one attendants and further below is a painting of nine female donors and eight attendants drawn in the Five Dynasties. The top portion of the north wall shows ten flying figures, celestial mansions, and fifteen sitting Buddhas, the middle portion has Avalokiteśvara preaching the dharma flanked by eighteen cross-legged sitting Buddhas; below them are forty-seven male donors, further below are the portraits of twenty-eight male donors drawn during the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the east wall are eight flying figures, celestial mansions and seventeen cross-legged sitting Buddhas painted in Sui. Along the upper portion of the entrance is a painting of seven Buddhas and to the north and south is a painting of eight cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn in Sui.

#### **Cave No. 391**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling has a canopy of bodhi-ratna drawn in the Five Dynasties. The rear portion has preaching scene and in the niche on the west wall is painted a halo along with a preaching scene. The north and south walls also have a preaching scene each drawn in the Five Dynasties.

#### **Cave No. 392**

**Period of Construction:** Sui and Early Tang (renovated during Middle Tang, the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties, on both sides are scenes of Vaiśravaṇa attending sermon; on the north and south sides are damaged statues of Lokapālas.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling features the ten kings of hell drawn in the Five Dynasties. Both the north and south slopes feature five cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The north and south walls display damaged paintings drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows two dragons and lotus designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas, the west slope shows four flying figures and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall houses statues of one cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas carved in Sui. Statues of standing Maitreya Bodhisattva and two bodhisattvas decorate the south wall, the north wall holds statues of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. Above the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene painted during Sui, the north and south sides of the entrance are covered by miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 393**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall has lotus flower; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. Statues of a sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas cast in Song are seen on the west wall. The wall also illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra; below it are two yakṣas. The south wall is covered by miniature Buddhas; below them are two bhikṣus and two female donors. The north wall has the same features as the south wall but has three male donors and one bhikṣu at the lower level. On the south, north sides and above the entrance of the east wall are miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 394**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling has sūtra illustrations in a corner drawn in the Five Dynasties. Above the entrance of the west wall are floating clouds, to the north and south of the entrance are disciples and two sitting Buddhas respectively. The south wall shows a damaged painting of disciples and bodhisattvas while the painting on the north wall is blurred. All these are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows the lotus designs; the slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall contains statues of Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. West to east on the south wall are a preaching scene with a cross-legged sitting Buddha, a preaching scene with sitting bodhisattvas; at a lower level are seven male donors, a bhikṣu and a bhikṣunī. Preaching scenes are seen on the north wall; below this are other figures like male and female donors, a bhikṣunī and a bhikṣu. The Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra is illustrated above the entrance on the east wall; on the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of two devarājas.

**Cave No. 395**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The south wall has the image of a monk, landscape and a deer. The north wall depicts Vaiśravaṇa drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The east slope of the ceiling has precious offerings, floating clouds; on the west slope are shown two flying figures. The niche on the west wall contains a statue of standing Buddha cast in Qing, the north and south walls have an illustration each of the Sūtra for Avalokiteśvara, on both sides is the description of the Chapter on Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara. Above the entrance on the east wall is a damaged painting of miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui.

**Cave No. 396**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is an illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, the north side of the entrance shows the Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara and people being rescued from sufferings painted during the Five Dynasties. A corner of the north wall illustrates the Avalokiteśvara Sūtra.

**Corridor:** The north wall features the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows a lotus design in the centre; the four slopes are covered with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of one cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas carved in Sui. The north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas on the top portion; a preaching scene in the centre; below are seven female donors on the south side with yakṣas further below; on the north side are five male donors at the lower level and yakṣas further below. Above the entrance on the east wall and on the north side are miniature Buddhas.

#### Cave No. 397

**Period of Construction:** Sui and Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A damaged painting of a meditating Buddha belonging to the Five Dynasties is on the west slope. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties and the murals on this wall are uniformly blurred. Illustrated on the north and south walls are preaching scenes and sūtras.

**Corridor:** History of Buddhism of Khotan and other areas is depicted as the central painting on the ceiling. The north and south slopes are painted with auspicious symbols. The north and south walls feature male donors. All these are paintings of the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows the three rabbits (joining as one) and lotus in the centre; the four slopes are covered with decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The upper portion of the north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas; below are the bodhisattvas, donors and bhikṣus. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui, on the north and south sides are miniature Buddhas drawn in Early Tang; below them are three bodhisattvas.

#### Cave No. 398

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall shows lotus and flaming pearl in the centre, the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The north and south walls have the same features: the top portion showing flying figures and celestial mansions, the middle portion having a preaching scene; the lower portion having donors and a bhikṣu. Above the entrance on the east wall are the portraits of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the south side of the entrance at the top are two flying figures and celestial mansions drawn in Sui, below are donors and a devarāja. To the north of the entrance is a portrait of a bodhisattva with a halo, drawn in Sui.

#### Cave No. 399

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows floral designs drawn in Western Xia. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. Alms-offering bodhisattvas adorn the north and south walls.



**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall shows the floral designs, the four slopes show the circular lines, floral motifs, decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Sui. The north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvātī-Sūtra. Cloud lines and precious offerings are drawn above the entrance of the east wall. On the north and south sides are portraits of bodhisattvas.

#### **Cave No. 400**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** On the south side of the entrance of the west wall are damaged paintings of Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling is decorated with flower clusters. The north and south slopes show damaged hanging curtain designs.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling exhibits two dragons, the four slopes are covered by circular lines and floral designs. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas along with a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne, all cast in Sui. The upper portion of the south wall is covered by decorative hangings, the middle portion illustrates the Amitābha Sūtra, and the lower portion shows the alms-offering devas inside the painted bottle-shaped door. The upper portion of the north wall is covered with decorative hangings; middle portion illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra; the lower portion has the same features as the south wall. The top portion of the east wall is covered with the decorative hangings, the Sukhāvātī-Sūtra is illustrated on the north, south and above the entrance on the east wall. Inside the painted bottle-shaped door at a lower level are the alms-offering devas.

#### **Cave No. 401**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties, Early Tang and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra is illustrated in a corner of the west slope of the ceiling. Above the entrance of the west wall is the scene of Vaiśravaṇa attending sermon painted during the Five Dynasties and to the north of the entrance are four Nāgarājas paying homage to Buddha.

**Corridor:** The ceiling depicts Buddhist history of Khotan in the centre; the north and south slopes describe five auspicious symbols both from the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of caisson ceiling shows lotus flower and flying figures; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and six bodhisattvas cast in Sui and repaired in Qing. The inner chamber of the niche has six bodhisattvas painted in Sui flanking halos. The outer chamber of it is painted with an Indra also identified as Dongwanggong, and his celestial spouse also identified as Xiwangmu with two "Man-but-not-man" (ren-feiren) figures and eleven flying figures. The niche on the south wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva and two attendant bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The niche on the north wall houses statues of Samantabhadra and two bodhisattvas. Above the entrance on the east wall is a painting of seven Buddhas drawn in Sui, a preaching scene painted during Early Tang; to the north and south of the entrance are portraits of Avalokiteśvara, Bhaiṣajyaguru and Virūdhaka respectively painted during the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 402**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall is a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara painted during the Five Dynasties; on the north and south of the entrance is a faded nāgarāja, and fragments in relief of the armour of the warriors carved in Sui. The south and north walls illustrate the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling is decorated by the portrait of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara; the north and south slopes have four cross-legged sitting Buddhas each. The north and south walls have portraits of the Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara and Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara respectively painted during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The entire ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas of Sui vintage. The niche on the west wall houses a statue of a Buddha cast in Sui and repaired in Qing and two disciples and four bodhisattvas cast in Qing. The top portion of the south wall shows a glimpse of paradise and twelve flying figures drawn in Sui. The middle portion has miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. The lower portion shows a painting of five female donors painted during the Five Dynasties. The north wall has identical features as on the south. On the east wall on top there is a glimpse of the paradise with flying figures painted during Sui; on top and north and south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui. There are also bodhisattvas and donors painted in the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 403**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (statues being renovated during Qing).

**Contents:** The ceiling shows lotus flowers in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings, miniature Buddhas and Aupapādakas. The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Sui and repaired in Qing along with two statues of disciples cast in Qing. The north and south walls are painted with miniature Buddhas; below them are three males and three females respectively. Above the entrance on the east wall are miniature Buddhas; to the south of the entrance are once again miniature Buddhas; below them are three female donors. On the north side of the entrance too are miniature Buddhas; below them are a male donor, horse-groom and two horses.

**Cave No. 404**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (statues repaired in Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** On the north and south walls there are fragments of warriors.

**Main Hall:** The entire ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two bodhisattvas cast in Sui and statues of two disciples and one bodhisattva cast in Qing. The top portion of the south wall features a glimpse of the paradise; miniature Buddhas with a preaching bodhisattva as the central painting in the middle portion; donors at the lower portion and yakṣas further below. The north wall has a glimpse of the paradise and eleven flying musicians at the top; miniature Buddhas having cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre at the middle; five male donors, two attendants, six damaged female donors, nine attendants and a bhikṣu at the lower level; further below are yakṣas. The top portion of the east wall is painted with a scene of paradise, ten

flying musicians and an Aupapādaka. Above the entrance are miniature Buddhas; to the north and south of the entrance are miniature Buddhas; below them are donors, horses and canopies.

**Cave No. 405**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling exhibits lotus flowers in the centre; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings in the corners and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a sitting Buddha and a bodhisattva cast in Sui and repaired in Qing, and statues of a bodhisattva and two disciples cast in Qing. The south wall shows miniature Buddhas with Avalokiteśvara preaching in the centre; the north wall features miniature Buddhas with a preaching Buddha in the centre. Above the entrance, to the south and north of it are miniature Buddhas, and at the lower level are donors drawn in Song.

**Cave No. 406**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows four designs of a set of three rabbits (joining as one) and lotus; the four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha and of two disciples cast in Sui and Qing. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas drawn during the Sui. At a lower level on the south wall are four donor bhikṣus and male donors. The north wall has a musician at the lower level. These are paintings of Song. Miniature Buddhas are painted above the entrance on the east wall and on the north and south sides of the entrance. Below them are Song paintings of ox carts and male donors.

**Cave No. 407**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song and Qing).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows a bodhisattva in the centre; both the north and south slopes have three cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The north and south walls feature a damaged painting of Song.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling is covered with the three rabbits, lotus designs and flying figures drawn in Sui. The four slopes have decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha, a disciple and four bodhisattvas cast in Sui and a statue of a bodhisattva cast in Qing. The north, south and east walls have miniature Buddhas. Below these on the south are thirteen female, eight male and four female donors drawn in Song. The lower level of the north wall features twenty male donors and four attendants, and nine female donors also drawn in Song. Above the entrance of the east wall is a preaching scene and a sitting Buddha drawn during Song; the north and south sides of the entrance are covered by miniature Buddhas. On the south side are a bodhisattva and ten female donors at a lower level; while the north side shows male donors below a bodhisattva. All these paintings are of Song.

**Cave No. 408**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The north and west slopes of the ceiling show chess-board and floral designs. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples carved in Sui and Qing Dynasties. The top portion of north and south walls is painted with decorative hangings, the middle portion depicts bodhisattvas attending sermon, each depiction having a small circular niche in the centre. The lower portion is painted with narrow doorways inside which are drawn precious offerings. The top portion of the east wall is covered by decorative hangings. Above the entrance of the east wall is an illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; to the south of the entrance is illustrated the Samantabhadra-Sūtra and to the north is the Mañjuśrī-Sūtra. Below both the sūtra illustrations are painted narrow doorways inside which are drawn precious offerings.

**Cave No. 409**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (the stucco statues being redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The ceiling shows floral patterns in the centre; the north and south slopes are covered by flowered canopies. Both the north and south walls have a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha and a bodhisattva.

**Main Hall:** The east and west slopes of the front portion of the ceiling have floral designs. The rear portion has damaged floral designs. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, one bodhisattva, two devarājas carved during Western Xia and statues of two disciples and a bodhisattva during Qing. The north and south walls are covered by decorative hangings on the upper portion; miniature Buddhas in the middle portion. Below them is a painting of a bottle-shaped door with ratnas inside it. The east wall has the decorative hangings on the upper portion, on the north and south sides and above the entrance are miniature Buddhas, portraits of the Western Xia King, prince and seven attendants are drawn on the south side of the entrance while those of the two queens and an angel are drawn on the north side. Below them precious offerings in a narrow doorway.

**Cave No. 410**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The lotus occupies the centre of the caisson ceiling in the main hall; the north, south and west slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas, and the east slope is damaged. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a sitting Buddha, two bodhisattvas carved in Sui and of a disciple cast in Qing. Both the south and east walls are painted with miniature Buddhas with a damaged niche in the centre.

**Cave No. 411**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Western Xia and Qing).

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling shows damaged miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, four disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui and Qing. The north and south walls feature damaged paintings of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 412**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Qing).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and eight disciples cast in Sui. On the two sides of the outer layer are statues of two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast during Qing and Sui Dynasties. The east side of both the north and south walls exhibits a bodhisattva statue and both the walls are covered by miniature Buddhas. Below them are damaged paintings of donors drawn in Sui.

**Cave No. 413**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Yuan and Qing Dynasties).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses a Buddha throne and hanging Chinese gown cast in Sui, one cross-legged sitting Buddha, four disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Qing. Miniature Buddhas are featured on both the north and south walls.

**Cave No. 414**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (the statues being renovated in Qing).

**Contents:** The corners of the west and south slopes of the ceiling have miniature Buddhas. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha cast in Sui and four disciples and one bodhisattva carved during Qing. The south wall has a damaged painting of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 415**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (the statues redecorated during Qing).

**Contents:** The south slope shows floral patterns and decorative hangings in a corner; the lower layer reveals a painting of a caisson ceiling drawn in Sui. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two devarājas cast in Western Xia, a disciple, a bodhisattva and a horse-hoof shaped Buddha throne cast in Qing. The north and south walls illustrate the Sukhāvātī Sūtra with bodhisattvas in the centre, two on the north wall and thirteen on the south wall.

**Cave No. 416**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Sūtra depicting the reincarnation of Maitreya in the Tushita Heaven is painted in the front portion of the west slope. The niche on the west wall contains statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas cast in Sui. The south wall shows traces of celestial mansions and flying figures and miniature Buddhas in a corner. The north features a damaged painting in a corner.

**Cave No. 417**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall contains statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas of Sui. Outside the niche, on either side are statues of a bodhisattva in ardhapadmāsana. The top portion of the north and south walls shows celestial mansions and flying figures and the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas.

### Cave No. 418

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The painting above the entrance on the west wall is blurred. To the south and north of the entrance are portraits of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī. All these are paintings of Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has floral designs in the centre. The south slope shows a blurred painting belonging to Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting and preaching Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas. The front portion of the south wall reveals miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui, illustration of Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra; two male and four female donors at the bottom. Seen in the rear portion is a portrait of Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha with five male donors below it. The north wall shows a preaching scene below the front slope; an illustration of the Amitābha-Sūtra; below this are three male and four female donors. The rear portion features a Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha below which are five male donors. Above the entrance of the east wall are five cross-legged sitting Buddhas, to the north and south of the entrance are two bodhisattvas with male and female donors below them. All the paintings are drawn in Western Xia.

### Cave No. 419

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance of the west wall are drawn precious offerings, two flying figures, seven Buddhas drawn in Western Xia and to the north of the entrance is Mañjuśrī.

**Main Hall:** On the front top portion of the west slope of the ceiling are illustrations of chapters of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra in two rows and below these is the Jātaka of Prince Sattva in one row. Illustration of Prince Sudāna in three rows is shown on the upper portion of the east slope with the Jātakatale of Prince Sattva below in one row. The niche on the west wall shelters the statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas. Seen on the upper portion of the north, south and east walls are the celestial mansions and flying figures; miniature Buddhas having a preaching scene as the central painting in the middle portion and yakṣas and donors at the lower portion of the north and south walls. The top portion of the east wall features celestial palace railings and walls and twelve flying figures; above the entrance and to the north and south of it are miniature Buddhas with the donors and yakṣas below.

### Cave No. 420

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song and Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The western slope of the ceiling has the remnants of Western Xia art designs, while the inner layer of the wall exposes Sui paintings.

**Corridor:** It features art designs on the ceiling and bodhisattvas on the northern and southern walls painted in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling shows lotus flowers; the four slopes are covered by decorative hangings, an illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, flying figures and celestial mansions. The niche of the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas. Each of the niches on the north and south walls houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The upper and middle portions on the east wall depict the preaching scene, a Song inscription of invocations is seen above the entrance of the east wall, and the south and north of the entrance have each a painting of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 421**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents:** A corner of the caisson ceiling and the west and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings and miniature Buddhas while the north slope is covered by miniature Buddhas. The paintings on all the three slopes are damaged. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two disciples, cast in Sui and Qing. Miniature Buddhas are seen on the north and south walls.

**Cave No. 422**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses statues of a sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas. The north and south walls have miniature Buddhas, and donors.

**Cave No. 423**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents:** In the front portion of the east slope of the ceiling there is an illustration of Jātaka of Prince Sudāna. The west slope shows a sūtra-illustration depicting the reincarnation of Maitreya in Tushita Heaven. The rear portion of the ceiling has the illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra with depictions on either side of Indra, Brahma and preaching scene. The niche on the west wall houses statues of sitting Buddha, two disciples and two bodhisattvas. On the upper portion of the north and south walls are paintings of celestial mansions, thirteen flying musicians. Miniature Buddhas are in the middle portion; below them are donors and bhikṣus. The upper portion of the east wall shows celestial mansions, flowers, and flying figures. To the south and above the entrance are miniature Buddhas. On the south side below the miniature Buddhas are five donors.

**Cave No. 424**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling shows an illustration of Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra drawn in Sui. The top portion of the west wall shows a preaching scene drawn in Song.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling has a preaching scene; the north and south slopes feature two cross-legged sitting Buddhas; these paintings are drawn in Song.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling is full of miniature Buddhas. The niche of the west wall shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples and four bodhisattvas. The upper portion of the north and south walls shows celestial palace railings and walls, eleven flying musicians, the middle portion taken by miniature Buddhas and preaching scenes while the male and female donors from the Song occupy the lower portion. The east wall shows the same painting on the upper portion as the other two walls. Above the entrance, to the north and south are miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 425**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** Only the heads of disciples remain on the west wall.

**Cave No. 426**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has the lotus designs with the decorative hangings on the four slopes. The west slope shows two flying figures, and the south slope, three cross-legged sitting Buddhas in meditation. The niche on the west wall houses a painting of lotus and halo flame. The north and south walls have depictions of preaching scenes.

**Cave No. 427**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The wooden structure repaired in Song features birds and celestial musicians in the columns on the outer side, and flying figures, miniature Buddhas, Buddha preaching scenes, bodhisattvas and celestial musicians in the inner side. The western slope of the ceiling is painted with the scene of Nirvāṇa of Sui vintage retouched by Song painters. On the west wall there is a Song invocation in the centre atop the entrance with Sui carved warrior redecorated in Song on both the north and south of the entrance. On both the north and south walls there are two Sui devarāja statues redecorated in Song.

**Corridor:** On both the northern and southern slopes of the ceiling there are five sitting Buddhas painted in Song. On the south wall is the Song painting of General Cao Yuanzhong with attendants, while his wife features on the north wall.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche on the central column houses Sui statues of Buddha, and a set of two bodhisattvas, a painting of miniature Buddhas with six bodhisattvas below on the wall. The north, south and west-facing niches on the column each house statues of a meditating Buddha and two disciples. The north, south and west walls show Sui paintings of celestial mansions, and donors with flying figures on the upper portion. The middle portion of the west wall has miniature Buddha representation with the central painting of a preaching scene. A Song painting of male donors is seen in the lower portion. On the slope of the upper portion of the north and south walls there are Sui statues of a Buddha, bodhisattvas, painting of miniature Buddhas with the bodhisattvas below. The rear portion of the walls has miniature Buddha painting with donors below the Buddha figures. Above, to the north and south of the east wall entrance are miniature Buddha figures with Sui painting of donors and donor bhikṣus below them.

**Cave No. 428**



**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The middle of the west slope of the ceiling shows an illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra, while the north and south sides show preaching scene.

**Corridor:** A part of painting of mantra of the Five Dynasties remains on the centre and the northern and southern slopes of the ceiling. The south wall is painted with Cao Yijin and his son while on the north wall his Uighur wife and attendants.

**Main Hall:** The central column has an east-facing niche housing statues of a cross-legged preaching Buddha and two disciples. The north, south and west-facing niches on the column shelter similar statues. The west wall's top portion has miniature Buddha images, the middle portion starting from south depicts preaching scenes, precious throne and the vajra pagoda, Nirvāṇa Sūtra, Śākya and Prabhūtaratna Buddha. and at the bottom are two hundred thirty-six donors in three rows and further below are the decorative hangings. The front portion of the slope on the south wall depicts a preaching scene, and the extending wall has miniature Buddha images. Starting from the east, the middle portion shows preaching Buddha in the cross-legged posture, Rocana or illuminating Buddha, a preaching Buddha in the cross-legged sitting pose, a meditating Buddha while walking, and a preaching Buddha in a cross-legged sitting pose. Male donors and bhikṣu donors are shown below and further below are the decorative hangings. The north wall shows the preaching scene at the lower portion. The extended wall shows the images of miniature Buddhas on the top, in the middle portion starting from the east are the preaching scenes, Māra Vijaya Sūtra, a preaching scene, and two illustrations of walking and meditating Buddha. The lower portion carries the figures of donors and donor bhikṣus. The upper portion of the east wall carries miniature Buddha images, to the south of the entrance is an illustration of the story of Prince Sattva, and below are three rows of donors. To the north of the entrance is the story of Prince Sudhāna with the donors shown in three rows.

#### **Cave No. 429**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** With fragments of Song paintings of bhikṣus on the west wall.

**Main Hall:** The north and south walls have illustrations of miniature Buddhas with a row each of male and female donors. On the east wall to the north and south of the entrance are illustrations of miniature Buddhas.

#### **Cave No. 430**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A painting of Amitābha Buddha is seen on the west wall above the entrance. To the south of the entrance are bodhisattvas and in the lower layer to the north of the entrance is a Northern Zhou painting of devarāja.

**Corridor:** With remnants of floral designs painted in Northern Zhou.

**Main Hall:** On the east and west slopes of the front portion of the ceiling in the main hall are the Ionicera designs, mañi and lotus flowers. The niche on the west wall shelters the statues of a sitting Buddha and two disciples. The upper portion shows celestial mansions along with dancing and flying figures. Miniature Buddha figures occupy the middle portion and at the bottom is a Song painting of donor bhikṣus and male donors. The north wall shows an addition of a Buddha throne in the Song dynasty, and an image of a standing Buddha. At present there is only one Buddha image. The top portion of the north wall depicts dancing and flying figures from the celestial palace, with miniature Buddhas in the middle and the paintings of donors drawn in Northern Zhou and Song at the bottom. The top portion of the east wall shows celestial palace and eight dancing and flying figures. Above the entrance of the east wall is a painting of Maitreya Bodhisattva; the south and north sides of the entrance each showing a painting of miniature Buddhas with a painting of donors at the bottom drawn in Song.

### Cave No. 431

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during Early Tang and Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** There are wooden structures and eaves repaired in Song. There are four columns on the wooden structure and each column is octagonal. On the eaves there are kalaviṅkas, flying figures, bodhisattvas, celestial musicians with a preaching scene. On the ceiling are miniature Buddhas, Buddhas, flying figures and celestials attending sermon drawn in Song. Above the entrance on the west wall is inscribed an invocation. On both sides of this invocation is a portrait of "water-and-moon" Avalokiteśvara. To the south of the entrance on the top portion are the Buddhas of the ten directions drawn in Song. The middle portion has a scene of Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon; below this are the male donors. On the north side of the entrance the top portion has Buddhas of the ten directions; the middle portion features Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon; below this are female donors. The paintings to the north and south of the entrance are drawn in Song. The south wall has an illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra; below it are three male donors. The north wall has an illustration of the Avatamsaka-Sūtra; below it are female donors. All these paintings belong to Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling has portrait of Peacock King in the centre drawn in Song. Both the north and south walls have five miniature Buddhas.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche of the central column shelters a statue of a preaching Buddha in cross-legged sitting posture. The north, south and west-facing niches on the column each shelter a meditating Buddha statue, with bodhisattvas on the two sides outside the niche. The upper portion of the west wall shows five celestial musicians; the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas with a white-robed Buddha as the central figure. Both these are drawn in Northern Wei. Below them are depictions from Early Tang of the sixteen meditations. The inner layer of the wall reveals yakṣas drawn in Northern Wei, below them are donor ox-cart, horses, seventeen male and one female donors drawn in Early Tang; there are seven attendants. The upper portion on the south wall shows seventeen celestial musicians. The middle portion features miniature Buddhas with a meditating Buddha in the centre, on both sides are thirty-two alms-offering bodhisattvas drawn in Northern Wei; below them are ten scenes on the nine-fold future life in Sukhāvātī. Below these are portraits of a bhikṣu, twenty-two female donors and four attendants drawn in Early Tang. The upper portion of the north wall features twelve celestial musicians; the middle portion is covered by miniature Buddhas with a meditating Buddha in the centre; below them is the story of Ajātaśatru painted in Early Tang. Miniature Buddhas Northern Wei painting on the top portion of the east wall. The niche above the entrance houses a statue of cross-legged bodhisattva cast in Northern Wei and a painting of bodhisattvas drawn in Song. To the south and north of the entrance are two paintings of devarājas drawn in Early Tang.

**Cave No. 432**

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: *Ante-room:*** The west wall has Western Xia paintings of two scenes of Buddha attending the sermon on both north and south of the entrance and a part of the damaged Western Xia painting of the five Buddhas of all directions. The inner layer reveals fragments of paintings of Northern Wei and the Five Dynasties. On the south wall there are eight categories of Supernatural Beings on the inner layer covered by art designs of Western Xia on the surface layer.

***Corridor:*** Art designs on the ceiling and bodhisattvas on the north and south walls all painted in Western Xia.

***Main Hall:*** The east-facing niche on the central column houses a statue of a sitting Buddha and on either side, outside the niche, is a bodhisattva statue. The south, west and north-facing niches of the column each shelter a statue of a meditating Buddha. The upper portions of the four walls have a Western Xia painting of decorative hangings. The middle portion of the west wall has a painting of miniature Buddhas and in the lower portion of the flask-shaped entrance of all the four walls are the precious offerings.

**Cave No. 433**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** An illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra is in the front portion of the east slope of the cave's ceiling. The west slope depicts a preaching scene. The rear portion of the ceiling has an illustration of the Maitreya Sūtra flanked by the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra with Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti to the south and north respectively. The niche on the west wall houses Sui statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The rest of the upper portion of the four walls has celestial mansions and decorative hangings with the lower portion showing male and female donors and horses. To the north and south of the entrance on the east wall there are depictions of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 434**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall shelters a statue of a cross-legged sitting Buddha with a bodhisattva on either side. The north, south and east walls depict miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 435**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: *Corridor:*** Fragments of paintings of Five Dynasties are on the ceiling and north wall.

***Main Hall:*** The east-facing niche on the central column houses a sitting-preaching Buddha. The north and south-facing niches on the column each shelter statues of a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva while inside the west-facing one, a meditating Buddha. The upper portion of the four walls depicts dancers and musicians in the celestial palace. The west wall has the white-dressed Buddha in the centre with miniature Buddhas. The lower portion of all walls shows yakṣas. The front of the middle portion of the north and south walls illustrates preaching scenes, the rear portion miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 436**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The front portion of the east and west slopes of the cave's ceiling illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru and Maitreya Sūtras respectively. The west wall niche houses statues of one Buddha and two disciples. The upper portion of the south wall has celestial mansions and flying figures and the middle portion an incomplete painting of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 437**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Wooden structures repaired in Song Dynasty figure paintings of Maudgalyāyana etc. Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra (faded) and other bodhisattvas are painted and carved on the west wall. The north wall features Bhaiṣajyaguru with a bodhisattva carrying a vajra sword.

**Corridor:** An eight-armed Avalokiteśvara painted on the ceiling, with faded portraits painted in Song of General Cao Yuanzhong and his wife on opposite walls.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche of the central column shelters a statue of sitting and preaching Buddha. The south-facing niche on the column houses a statue of a meditating bodhisattva, while the north-facing one has a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva. The west wall's upper portion has a Song painting of decorative hangings, the mid portion having miniature Buddhas and the female donors at the bottom. The inverted "V" shaped slopes on the north and south walls each have two flying figures holding flower vase, the upper portion of the extending wall shows decorative hangings above, miniature Buddhas in the middle and male and female donors at the bottom. The north wall's top portion has a Song painting of decorative hangings, an invocation (without letters) above the entrance, to the north and south of the entrance miniature Buddha depictions with male donors and a bodhisattva at the bottom.

**Cave No. 438**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou.

**Contents:** The west wall niche houses a statue of sitting Buddha. Outside the niche, on either side, there is a bodhisattva statue. Each of the north and south walls has a painting of miniature Buddhas with the figures of warriors and donors below.

**Cave No. 439**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall shelters statues of a Buddha and two disciples, and outside the niche on either side is a bodhisattva statue. The southern wall has dancing, flying figures and a painting of miniature Buddhas.

**Cave No. 440**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses a Northern Zhou statue of a Buddha. An incomplete painting of the Five Dynasties is on the north wall.

**Cave No. 441**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Wei (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The west wall of the niche shows halo of Buddha drawn in the Five Dynasties, and the lower portion of north and south walls has a damaged painting of Northern Wei. The outer portion has a painting of disciples and bodhisattvas drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 442**

**Period of Construction:** Northern Zhou (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The inverted "V" shaped ceiling is destroyed.

**Main Hall:** The east-facing niche of the central column shelters a statue of sitting-preaching Buddha. The north, south and west-facing niches on the column shelter statues of Buddha and disciples. The upper portion of the west, north and south walls has dancing figures in celestial palace with miniature Buddha figures in the centre. The lower portion of the west and south walls has male donors and yakṣas. Most of these paintings have faded.

**Cave No. 443**

**Period of Construction:** Song Dynasty.

**Contents:** Painted on the west wall are fifteen images of monks, the laity and donors as well as monks belonging to the Sanjie Monastery. The east wall has fourteen images of laity and donors. Along the entrance of the south wall is the chestnut border design.

**Cave No. 444**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Song and Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** There are wooden structures repaired in Song. On the south wall there is a painting drawn in Song of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, Upāli and Pūrṇa and the devī of great merits and virtue. Above the entrance of the west wall are portraits of Kṣitigarbha, Bhaiṣajyaguru; the lower portion is damaged. To the south of the entrance are the Buddhas of the ten directions and bodhisattvas in two groups. To the north of the entrance are the Buddhas of ten directions in three groups. The inside of the north wall is Cave No. 443. Above the entrance are the Buddhas of ten directions in two groups; below them are nine inauspicious deaths. To the east of the entrance is the portrait of eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara. To the west of the entrance are two cross-legged sitting Buddhas, two devarājas; below them is a damaged painting of a female donor drawn in Song.

**Corridor:** The ceiling is damaged in the centre; both the north and south slopes feature nine sitting Buddhas. The south wall shows two male donors and the north wall features two female donors. All these paintings belong to Song.

**Main Hall:** The niche on the west wall of the main hall shelters statues of two bodhisattvas, two disciples and one devarāja cast in High Tang. On the platforms on both sides of the niche are statues of two bodhisattvas and a Chan monk statue shifted from Cave No. 443. The north and south walls feature miniature Buddhas with a preaching scene in the centre. On either side along the entrance of the east wall is a bodhisattva drawn in Song, above and to the north and south of the entrance are paintings of High Tang of Stūpa of Prabhūtaratna and Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara respectively.

**Cave No. 445**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** Avalokiteśvara adorns the centre of the ceiling; each of the north and south slopes has seven cross-legged sitting Buddhas. Both these paintings are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The slopes of the caisson ceiling show a pearl net and garlands. On each of the four slopes are miniature Buddhas drawn in Western Xia. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two devarājas. The south wall illustrates the Amitābha-Sūtra; below it are male donors painted in Western Xia. Worth noticing is a figure in the picture of Amitābha-Sūtra on top of a house which looks like a garuḍa. The north wall illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra; below it are female donors drawn in Western Xia. Above the entrance of the east wall is a picture of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, miniature Buddhas figure to the south of the entrance and a painting of bodhisattvas, precious offerings and flying figures drawn in the Five Dynasties along the entrance.

**Cave No. 446**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling has decorative hangings in the north side and miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang and the Five Dynasties. Miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang seen in a corner of the south slope; the corner of north slope features miniature Buddhas drawn in High Tang and the Five Dynasties. The niche on the west wall of the main hall houses statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two devarājas. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra with Ajātaśatru to the west. The north wall illustrates Maitreya-Sūtra. The top portion of the east wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra drawn in the Five Dynasties. The top portion of the east wall displays Bhaiṣajyaguru. Above the entrance is a painting of Hayagrīva drawn in the Five Dynasties. To the south and north of the entrance are illustrations of Mañjuśrī-Sūtra and Samantabhadra-Sūtra respectively drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 447**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses statues of two bodhisattvas and two devarājas, with a Buddha throne in the shape of a horse-hoof in the niche. A corner of the north wall shows a damaged painting of the Five Dynasties.

**Cave No. 448**

**Period of Construction:** Early Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The east-facing niche on the central column has fragments of the Buddha halo in relief carved on the west wall, while the north and south-facing niches are painted with miniature Buddhas, the west-facing niche illustrates Buddha preaching at Gṛdhrakūṭa (faded). The west wall has a depiction of a preaching scene in the centre flanked by miniature Buddha paintings (mostly faded). The north and south walls each have sūtra-illustrations drawn in the Five Dynasties. Below the one on the south wall are male donors. All these paintings are blurred.

#### **Cave No. 449**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling features a damaged picture of bodhisattvas in the centre; the north and south slopes feature four cross-legged sitting Buddhas. The south wall shows the donor image of Cao Yanlu and the north wall that of his wife, the Khotan princess, and two female attendants.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has coiled dragons and round petalled lotus; the four slopes are covered by floral motifs and decorative hangings. On the east slope are damaged decorative hangings and flying figures. The south, west and north slopes are painted with miniature Buddhas with a stūpa in the centre and inside the stūpa are Buddha, two bodhisattvas with an alms-offering flying figure on both sides. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall shows miniature Buddhas and chess-board patterns in the centre. The four slopes of the niche depict twenty-five auspicious images and four bodhisattvas. Inside the niche there are remnants of a Buddha seat with five disciples and bodhisattvas on both sides on the west wall. The eight categories of supernatural beings are painted on the north and south walls. On both north and south of the niche there are arches with Avalokiteśvara in various forms being highlighted on their ceilings and walls, along with other bodhisattvas. Further away are three scenes of Buddha attending sermon on both sides. West-eastwards on the south wall are illustrations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, the Amitāyus-Sūtra, Devatā-Sūtra. On the north wall from west to east are illustrations of the Avatamsaka-Sūtra, Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Maitreya-Sūtra. To the south and north of the entrance on the east wall are the illustrations of Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and Sūtra of Filial Piety. On the south side at a lower level are four male donors and on the north side at a lower level are six donor bhikṣus.

#### **Cave No. 450**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during Western Xia).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows floral designs in the centre; the south and north slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The north wall features a portrait of standing bodhisattva which is blurred.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows a painting of two dragons playing with a pearl (actually protecting the dharma ratna); the south and west slopes show floral motifs, circular lines and decorative hangings. The niche on the west wall shelters the stucco image of halo cast in High Tang and paintings drawn in Western Xia of a bodhi canopy, eight flying figures, four halos and flowers. The niches on the north and south walls shelter the stucco image of halo cast in High Tang and paintings of a bodhi canopy, eight flying figures and four halos drawn in Western Xia. Above the entrance on the east wall are preaching scenes; to the north and south of the entrance on the east wall are preaching scenes and bodhisattvas; below this are flowers.

**Cave No. 451**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall has halos and floating clouds. Miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui are on the north side outside the niche.

**Cave No. 452**

**Period of Construction:** Song.

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has a painting of backscreen flanked by eight disciples. All these are damaged. The south and north walls illustrate Amitābha-Sūtra and Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra respectively.

**Cave No. 453**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The inner layer of the niche on the west wall shows halos. The north wall features miniature Buddhas which are damaged partially.

**Cave No. 454**

**Period of Construction:** Song (renovated during Qing).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The west slope of the ceiling carries a damaged portrait of Mañjuśrī. Above the entrance of the west wall is a niche, drawn inside it are three pictures of Avalokiteśvara flanked by pictures of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. To the north and south of the entrance are the Buddhas of the ten directions attending sermon; below them is Vaiśravaṇa attending Nata's sermon. The top portion of the south wall shows Buddhas of the ten directions attending sermon. The lower portion of the wall is blurred.

**Corridor:** Traces of the history of Buddhism can be seen in the centre of the ceiling; the north and south slopes feature sixteen auspicious symbols. Seven male donors from the Cao family figure in a row on the south wall; seen behind them are three attendants. Painted in a row on the north wall are eight male donors; attendants are seen behind them.

**Main Hall:** Above the central Buddha platform are statues of twelve figures of issue-giving goddesses cast in Qing. The west, south and north sides show rockery and a six-panel screen with birds and flowers. The caisson ceiling shows damaged coiled dragons in the centre; the east slope illustrates the Maitreya-Sūtra and south and west slopes illustrate the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra and the Stūpa Sandarsana parivartana, while the north slope illustrates the Avatamsaka Sūtra. On the south wall, west-eastwards are the illustrations of the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, the Amitāyus-Sūtra, Sūtra for Redemption from Indebtedness and Devatā-Sūtra. The west wall illustrates the fight between Sāriputra and Raudrākṣa. Below this scene is the description of the story of Prince Sudhāna and Buddhist commentaries. On the north wall west-eastwards are illustrations of the Sūtra of Śākyamuni mastering the dhāraṇīs, Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā-Sūtra and Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra flanked by the nine inauspicious deaths and twelve great vows. Below these sūtra illustrations are screens painted with Buddhist commentaries. Below



the illustration of the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra are seven female donors; an illustration of the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra; below this illustration are six donors. Above the entrance of the east wall are illustrations of Buddhāloka from the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra. To the south and north are illustrations of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra with one side showing Vimalakīrti and the other showing Mañjuśrī. Below are depicted the King of Khotan along with six donors and princess of Uighur along with six donors and two bhikṣunīs.

#### **Cave No. 455**

**Period of Construction:** Sui Dynasty.

**Contents:** The inner layer of the niche on the west wall shows halos. On both sides of the west wall on the outer layer are the niche lintels; the niche column has damaged paintings. Each of the north and south walls features four disciples.

#### **Cave No. 456**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** *Corridor:* The ceiling depicts the Peacock King drawn in Song; both the north and south slopes feature three cross-legged sitting Buddhas.

**Main Hall:** On the east and west slopes of the ceiling are paintings of Buddhas of the ten directions attending sermon. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall is covered by chess-board and four-petalled flower designs. The east slope features two flying figures while the north, south and west slopes have twelve portraits of sitting Buddha. The north wall illustrates the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-Sūtra drawn in Song. The lower layer is painted with miniature Buddhas drawn in Sui. Above the entrance of the east wall is a portrait of flower-holding Avalokiteśvara; to the north and south are the portraits of Kṣitigarbha and eight-armed Avalokiteśvara respectively.

#### **Cave No. 457**

**Period of Construction:** Sui (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The ceiling of the niche on the west wall displays floral patterns in the centre; the north, south and west slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The lower layer of the south wall has a painting belonging to Sui; the surface layer shows a damaged painting drawn in Song.

#### **Cave No. 458**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents:** The west wall niche shelters statues of a cross-legged sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas, devarājas and bodhisattvas sculpted in High Tang. Outside the niche, on the upper portion of the north side of the platform is a statue of heavenly animal. Further away on the south there are fragments of High Tang paintings, and that of Bhaiṣajyaguru painted in Western Xia on the north. Preaching scenes drawn in Western Xia are described on the north wall.

#### **Cave No. 459**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses statues of a damaged Buddha, two disciples, one bodhisattva and one devarāja cast in Late Tang and two damaged statues cast in Song. The south wall illustrates the Lamkāvatāra-Sūtra drawn in Late Tang. The north wall has remnants of a corner of the illustration of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra.

#### **Cave No. 460**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated in Western Xia).

**Contents: Ante-room:** Art designs of flames and lotus painted in Western Xia are seen on the ceiling. Only five of the seven Buddhas drawn in Western Xia are seen above the entrance of the west wall. To the south of the entrance are Mañjuśrī and a bodhisattva. To the north is Samantabhadra. The south wall features a flying figure which is partially damaged. All these are drawn in Western Xia.

**Corridor:** The centre of the ceiling shows flowers and clouds; the north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings. The paintings were drawn in Western Xia.

**Main Hall:** The east slope of the ceiling shows the chess-board and floral designs in a corner, the south slope is painted with chess-board and floral patterns, decorative hangings and six flying figures, the west slope is adorned with decorative hangings and two flying figures and the north slope is covered by the chess-board and floral patterns, decorative hangings and a flying figure. The platform on the west wall has statues of the sitting Buddha, two each of disciples, bodhisattvas and devarājas cast in High Tang; on the west side below the platform are lotus and phoenix bird. The upper portion of the west wall shows canopy of bodhi-ratna, flying figures, halo and flowers. A preaching scene is featured on the west side of the upper portion of the north and south walls; below it on both the walls is a bodhisattva. The upper portion of the east side illustrates the Sukhāvātī-Sūtra drawn in Western Xia; below this drawn inside the bottle-shaped door is a flaming pearl. To the south of the entrance on the east wall is a preaching scene and the thousand-armed and eyed Avalokiteśvara, and below this inside the bottle-shaped door is a flaming pearl. The north side also has a preaching scene and thousand-armed Mañjuśrī with thousand bowls. Inside the bottle-shaped door is a flaming pearl. All these are of Western Xia.

#### **Cave No. 461**

**Period of Construction:** Western Wei.

**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows four lotus flowers; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The centre of the west slope is painted with the maṇi and pearl, on either side are two musicians. The south slope has four flying figures and musicians and the north slope shows five musicians. Celestial palace railings and walls are drawn at a lower level on the north, south and west slopes. The upper portion of the west wall is painted with decorative hangings, and the middle portion has Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna. The lintel of the niche depicts the story of Samaka and below it are drawn a throne, a male and three female donors; to the north and south are the altar columns tied with silk, five Buddhist disciples and two bodhisattvas. The north and south walls are covered by miniature Buddhas and below them is a border design.

#### **Cave No. 462**

**Period of Construction:** Yuan Dynasty.

**Contents:** The upper portion of the west wall shows impressions of statues, the lower portion has a damaged Buddha throne, chestnut lines and lotus designs, on the lower portion of the eastern side of the north wall are four donors.

**Cave No. 463**

**Period of Construction:** Yuan Dynasty.

**Contents:** The ceiling has lotus designs in the centre. Figures of five Buddhas and three bodhisattvas are painted on the upper portion of the west wall; the south wall features a portrait of Mañjuśrī, the top portion shows three disciples, the middle portion a monk, two donors, a lion and a slave. The north wall displays Samantabhadra and three female donors. Above the entrance on the east wall are the tantric designs and both the north and south sides of the entrance have four-armed vajras.

**Cave No. 464**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia (renovated in Yuan).

**Contents: Ante-room:** A corner of the south slope of the ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas. The north and south walls feature narrative paintings. The west end was sealed during Yuan. Paintings in this room belong to the Yuan.

**Corridor:** Miniature Buddhas cover the ceiling; the lower layer has a mural drawn during Western Xia. The north and south walls have portraits of four bodhisattvas.

**Main Hall:** The centre of the caisson ceiling shows the figure of a cross-legged sitting Buddha; the four slopes have the portrait of a sitting Buddha each. The west wall shows an eight-panel screen with figures of Buddha, disciples, devarājas with Indra preaching in the centre painted on the panels. The south wall has a six-panel screen with depictions of Śākya king, vajras, devarājas and disciples in the centre preaching the dharma. The north wall also shows a six-panel screen with figures of Buddha, devās, devarājas and Indra in the centre preaching the dharma. Above the entrance on the east wall is inscribed the six-word mantra. To the north and south of the entrance is an inscription in Mongolian script. On the south side of the entrance at the lower level are patterns drawn in Western Xia.

**Cave No. 465**

**Period of Construction:** Yuan Dynasty.

**Contents: Ante-room:** Above the entrance on the west wall is the image of a bodhisattva. Painted on the north and south sides of the entrance is pagoda. The north and south walls also feature pagodas.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows floating clouds; the north and south walls are painted with peony flowers.

**Main Hall:** The caisson ceiling has a portrait of Mahāvairocana; the east slope has Akṣobhya Buddha, the south Ratnasambhava Buddha. On the west slope is Amitāyus Buddha and on the north is Amoghasiddhi. The north, south and west walls have illustrations of three mandalas. Above the entrance on the east wall are figures of five vajras and four donor bhikṣus. To the south of the entrance is a mandala depiction

showing three groups of mule kings and four flame throwing children and below this a six-panel screen, to the north of the entrance is a mandala and 24 Vināyakas.

**Cave No. 466**

**Period of Construction:** Tang Dynasty.

**Contents:** This cave is located below Cave No. 47 and was discovered in 1948. All the murals are destroyed.

**Cave No. 467**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties and Song).

**Contents: Corridor:** The ceiling shows flower clusters in the centre. The lower layer has a damaged painting drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north and south slopes are covered by decorative hangings; the lower level features cross-legged sitting Buddhas drawn during the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The ceiling shows coiled dragon designs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with circular lines, chess-board patterns and the floral motifs. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has floral motifs in the centre; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings. The north and south walls have decorative hangings on the upper part, miniature Buddhas in the middle portion; the lower portion is blurred. The space above the entrance on the east wall is covered by decorative hangings, with miniature Buddhas below and the lower layer reveals a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties. On the north and south sides of the entrance are miniature Buddhas.

This cave was discovered in 1946.

**Cave No. 468**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Ante-room:** The ceiling is painted with miniature Buddhas. Above the entrance of the west wall is an invocation inscribed during the Five Dynasties. On the north and south sides of the entrance are portraits of Vajra warriors, one to a side. The top portion of the south wall displays a painting drawn in the Five Dynasties and the lower portion shows three male donors. The top portion of the north wall features a mural of the Five Dynasties while the lower part shows three female donors.

**Corridor:** The ceiling shows a sitting Bodhisattva drawn in the Five Dynasties.

**Main Hall:** The centre of caisson ceiling has three rabbits (joining as one) and a lotus design; the four slopes are painted with decorative hangings and garlands; the west slope illustrates the chapters from the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra; the two corners have the Chapter on Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara; the north and south slopes illustrate the thirty-three manifestations in the Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara from the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. The east slope illustrates chapter of Stūpa sandarsana parivartana of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra while the two corners have the Chapter on Universal Gate. The niche on the west wall houses statues of a bodhisattva and two disciples cast in Middle Tang. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyur-dhyāna-Sūtra drawn in the Five Dynasties with the sixteen meditations on the east side and Ajātaśatru on the west. The north wall illustrates

the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, the east and west sides show scenes from the nine inauspicious deaths and twelve great vows respectively and below this illustration is a throne. Above the entrance on the east wall are male and female donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. To the south of the entrance is a preaching scene of the Five Dynasties and below this is a portrait of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara; further below it is a throne. To the north of the entrance is a preaching scene drawn in the Five Dynasties, below it is the portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara; further below it is a throne.

**Cave No. 469**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents: Corridor:** The east and west walls feature portraits of Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara respectively.

This cave was discovered in 1952 and is south-facing.

**Cave No. 470**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The west slope of the ceiling is covered by miniature Buddhas having a cross-legged sitting Buddha in the centre; the south slope shows partially damaged miniature Buddhas; the north slope displays miniature Buddhas, floral motifs and decorative hangings. The ceiling of the niche on the west wall has floral designs in the centre; on the four slopes are eleven standing Buddhas and two bodhisattvas. The south wall illustrates two sūtras; the west corner has a portrait of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. Below are male and female donors drawn in Song. The north wall illustrates two sūtras. On the south side of the entrance on the east wall is a damaged painting of female donors drawn in Song.

**Cave No. 471**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The ceiling in the main hall is peeling off. The niche on the west wall exhibits chess-board and floral designs in the centre; the four slopes have portraits of thirteen Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddhas and four bodhisattvas. On the south wall west-eastwards is the illustration of Amitābha-Sūtra, on the north wall west-eastwards are the damaged illustrations of Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and Avatamsaka-Sūtra. Painted above the entrance of the east wall are male donors; to the north is the portrait of Cintāmaṇi-Cakra Avalokiteśvara.

This cave was discovered in 1953.

**Cave No. 472**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The west slope of the niche on the west wall contains a standing Buddha and an Aupapādaka, the north, south and east slopes have an incomplete painting each. The south wall illustrates

the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-Sūtra. The upper portion of the north wall painted with floral motifs and the border designs is damaged. The middle portion illustrates the Avatamsaka-Sūtra. To the south of the entrance on the east wall is the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra, below it is a cross-legged sitting bodhisattva and the north side also illustrates the Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra.

**Cave No. 473**

**Period of Construction:** Late Tang.

**Contents:** On the top portion of the west wall of the niche on the west wall are floral motifs and decorative hangings, and below these is a two-panel screen; the middle portion features halo. The top portion of the north and south walls has floral motifs and decorative hangings; below these is a two-panel screen. The south wall illustrates the Amitāyus-Sūtra, on the west side are the sixteen meditations; the north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra, the twelve great vows are on the west side.

**Cave No. 474**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The north, south and west slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas drawn in Middle Tang having a preaching scene in the centre. The niche on the west wall shows chess-board and floral designs painted in Middle Tang. The east slope has six sitting Buddhas, a bodhisattva, and an Aupapādaka; the south and north slopes have three sitting Buddhas, a bodhisattva and an Aupapādaka; the west slope has six sitting Buddhas and two bodhisattvas, all drawn in Middle Tang. There are sūtra-illustrations on the south wall; the north wall illustrates the Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra; both these are drawn in the Five Dynasties.

This cave was excavated in 1953.

**Cave No. 475**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The south wall features a damaged painting, below are donors drawn in the Five Dynasties. The north wall features a damaged preaching scene; below it is a painting of donors drawn in the same period.

**Cave No. 476**

**Period of Construction:** The Five Dynasties.

**Contents:** On the north side of the west wall are four bhikṣus.

**Cave No. 477**

**Period of Construction:** Renovated in Yuan Dynasty.

**Contents:** Horse-hoof shaped Buddha platform in the centre; drawn inside the bottle-shaped door are a flaming pearl and partially damaged floral motifs on the ceiling. The top portions of the north, south and west walls are covered by floral designs. The middle portion of these walls shows damaged statues.

**Cave No. 478**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang (renovated in Song).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall has floral designs drawn in Song. The north wall displays sūtra-illustrations drawn in Middle Tang which are partially damaged.

This cave was excavated in 1957.

**Cave No. 479**

**Period of Construction:** Middle Tang.

**Contents:** The west and south corners of the niche on the west wall reveal decorative hangings. The north wall has a preaching scene while south and east walls have damaged paintings.

**Cave No. 480**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** The west wall of the niche on the west wall shows a damaged halo.

This cave was excavated in 1957.

**Cave No. 481**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall has traces of halo.

**Cave No. 482**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall houses a set of five Buddha statues; outside the niche on the two sides of the platform are statues of two warriors. The paintings on the north and south walls are damaged.

**Cave No. 483**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang (renovated during the Five Dynasties).

**Contents:** The niche on the west wall has a damaged Buddha statue. The decorative hangings on the south wall are damaged.

This cave was excavated in 1957.

**Cave No. 484**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** The caisson ceiling in the main hall has floral designs; the south and west slopes have a damaged painting of miniature Buddhas. The south and west walls have a damaged painting drawn in Middle Tang.

**Cave No. 485**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** There are three niches on the west wall. This cave is above Cave No. 83, and below Cave No. 84.

**Cave No. 486**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** This is actually Cave No. 485. There was a mistake of counting the same cave as two different caves.

**Cave No. 487**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** There are three niches on the south wall and four on the north wall, all the niches are damaged. This cave is below Cave No. 467 and was probably renovated in Northern Wei.

**Cave No. 488**

**Period of Construction:** Not known (renovated probably before Tang).

**Contents:** There is a small rectangular niche on the top portion of the north wall near the east slope of the ceiling.

**Cave No. 489**

**Period of Construction:** Not known.

**Contents:** There is a small niche near the ceiling on the north wall. This cave is below Cave No. 481.

**Cave No. 490**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.



**Contents:** The centre of the caisson ceiling has been damaged. The north, south and west slopes show floral designs and decorative hangings. While the west slope is covered with miniature Buddhas, the north and south slopes are covered by miniature Buddhas that are damaged. The west wall shows a damaged portrait of Buddha, disciples and head of bodhisattva. The north wall has a disciple and the head of a bodhisattva.

**Cave No. 491**

**Period of Construction:** Western Xia.

**Contents:** This cave was discovered in 1965. Initially there was a Buddha statue in padmāsana and statues of two devakanyās (some think that they are female donors). These are now stored in the Dunhuang Academy of Cultural Relics.

**Cave No. 492**

**Period of Construction:** High Tang.

**Contents:** This cave is located on the south, outside Cave No. 54. On the wall inside the niche there are fragments of sculptures in relief.

*Compiled by Bagyalakshmi and B.R. Deepak*

**Note:** All the identifications mentioned above are according to the research of the

Dunhuang Academy unless otherwise specified. ---Editor

**Glossary**

An Cunli	安存立
Anguosi	安国寺
An Lushan	安禄山
Anxi	安息
Aotufa	凹凸法
Bayi	跋异
Bai Banzhi	白般纒
Baihu	白虎
Bai Juyi	白居易
Baiyitianzi	白衣天子
Baizhequn	百褶裙
Baodian	保典
Baoding	保定
Bao'ensi	报恩寺
Bao'enjing	报恩经
Bao fumo enzhong jing	报父母恩重经
Bao Kai	宝恺
Baoyingsi	宝应寺
Beijing	北京
Beishan	北山
Bianwen	变文
Binglingsi	炳灵寺
Buwangsi	不枉寺
Cai Lun	蔡伦
Cang Ci	仓慈

Cao Buxing	曹不兴
Cao Liangcai	曹良才
Cao Xianshun	曹贤顺
Cao Yan'gong	曹延恭
Cao Yanlu	曹延禄
Cao Yijin	曹议金
Cao Yuande	曹元德
Cao Yuanshen	曹元深
Cao Yuanzhong	曹元忠
Cao Zhongda	曹仲达
Chaxin Neikan	刹心内龛
Chanku	禅窟
Chanyue	禅月
Chang'an	长安
Changle	长乐
Changqing	长庆
Changsha	长沙
Chang Shuhong	常书鸿
Changsongfu	长松府
Chen Hao	陈皓
Chan Qing	陈庆
Chense	衬色
Chengdu	成都
Chengxuan	承玄
Chengyang	承阳
Chi	尺
Chihua Longnu	持花龙女
Chixiang Longnu	持香龙女
Chongqing	重庆

Chongxiu Beidaxiang Ji	重修北大像记
Chu Suilang	褚遂良
Chu Yan	处严
Chuanshen	传神
Chuigong	垂拱
Chuisse	吹色
Cishi	慈氏
Congling	葱岭
Cui Buyi	崔不意
Daban Niepan jing	大般涅槃经
Dachengsi	大乘寺
Dacheng rulengjia jing	大乘入楞伽经
Dafahuasi	大法华寺
Dafangbianfo bao'en jing	大方便佛报恩经
Dafoguangsi	大佛光寺
Dafushengsi	大福圣寺
Dahou longwang	大吼龙王
Dajian'ansi	大建安寺
Dali	大历
Dali longwang	大力龙王
Daqianshijie	大千世界
Daqingliangsi	大清凉寺
Dasheng Wenshu zhenshen dian	大圣文殊真身殿
Dawangzisi	大王子寺
Daxia	大夏
Dayanta	大雁塔
Daye	大业

Dayunsi	大云寺
Dazhong	大中
Dai Kui	戴逵
Daitianfa	代田法
Danyang	丹阳
Danzhou	丹州
Danghe	党河
Daocheng	道诚
Daokou	道口
Daowu	道武
Daoxuan	道宣
Dengxian	邓县
Dingjiazha	丁家闸
Dingyangxian	定阳县
Dong Baode	董保德
Dongbi Yizhen	动必依真
Dongjingfu	东京赋
Dong qianfodong	东千佛洞
Dongwanggong	东王公
Dongyang	东阳
Dongyou	董道
Du Fu	杜甫
Du Yanhong	杜严弘
Duan Chengshi	段成式
Duan roushi	断肉食
Duan Wenjie	段文杰
Dunhuang	敦煌
Dunhuang bihua gaishu	敦煌壁画概述
Dunhuang caisu yishu	敦煌彩塑艺术

Dunhuang nianyun	敦煌廿韵
Dunhuang pusa	敦煌菩萨
Dunhuang shiku yishu lunji	敦煌石窟艺术论集
Dunhuang shishi yishu	敦煌石室艺术
Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo	敦煌文物研究所
Dunhuang Yanjiu	敦煌研究

Eshi	恶事
Eyou	恶友
Eyoupin	恶友品

Facheng	法成
Fafu	法服
Falang	法郎
Faliang	法良
Famensi	法门寺
Farong	法荣
Faxian	法显
Fayuan zhulin	法苑珠林
Fan Guozhong	范国忠
Fanhe	番禾
Fan Jingshi	樊锦诗
Fangxiang	方响
Feilian	飞廉
Fengtangsi	奉唐寺
Fofa wubian	佛法无边
Fokanji	佛龕记
Fotudeng	佛图澄
Fotuhu	佛图户

Fujian	苻坚
Fujian	福建
Futian	福田
Fuxi	伏羲
Fu Yi	傅奕
Ganlu	甘露
Ganquan	甘泉
Gansu	甘肃
Ganzhou	甘州
Gaochang	高昌
Gao Kui	高悝
Gaomiaobaokansi	高妙宝龕寺
Gaomiaoguiyansi	高妙归严寺
Gaosengzhuan	高僧传
Gaozong	高宗
Gaozu	高祖
Gezizangsuobu	格西藏琐布
Gongdeji	功德记
Gu Guguan	顾姑冠
Gu Kaizhi	顾恺之
Guxi	古稀
Guayi	掛衣
Guazhou	瓜州
Guanhuan	观幻
Guanxiu	贯休
Guanwuliangshoujing	观无量寿经
Guangping	广平
Guangshun	广顺
Guangyun	广运

Guiyi	归义
Guo Ruoxu	郭若虚
Guo Si	郭肆
Haiyansi	海眼寺
Han	汉
Han Huang	韩滉
Hanwudi	汉武帝
Hanxuema	汗血马
Han Yu	韩愈
Haozhou	亳州
Hebei	河北
He Chenxia	和晨霞
He Jingzhi	贺敬之
Henan	河南
Henei	河内
Hexi	河西
Hexi zoulang	河西走廊
Hengsha	恒沙
Hongbian	洪筌
Hong Yiran	洪毅然
Houjunji	侯君集
Huxuan	胡旋
Huyan	呼衍
Huacheng	化城
Huaheinu	滑黑女
Huayan	华严
Huazang shijie	花藏世界
Huainanzi	淮南子
Huaiyi	怀义



Huangfu	皇甫
Huang Fulong	皇甫隆
Huangqingsi	皇庆寺
Huang Quan	黄筌
Huisheng	惠生
Huiya	麾牙
Huiyuan	慧苑
Ji Kang	嵇康
Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu	集神州三宝感通录
Jiyiqiefa	集一切法
Jiading	嘉定
Jiayuguan	嘉峪关
Jianbaota	见宝塔
Jiande	建德
Jianlong	建隆
Jianping	建平
Jianxian	建显
Jianzhong	建仲
Jinchang	晋昌
Jinguangmingsi	金光明寺
Jinhuai kuangda	襟怀旷达
Jinren	金人
Jinshan	金山
Jinshu	晋书
Jingbian	经变
Jingfu	景福
Jingtusi	净土寺
Jingyou	景佑

Jingzong	景宗
Jiupin wangsheng	九品往生
Jiuquan	酒泉
Jiu Tangshu	旧唐书
Julu	巨鹿
Juqu Mengxun	沮渠蒙逊
Juqu Mujian	沮渠牧犍
Jun	郡
Kaibao	开宝
Kaicheng	开成
Kaihuang	开皇
Kaiming	开明
Kaiyuansi	开元寺
Kaiyun	开运
Kancheng	坎城
Kanyin	阌驸
Kangsenghui	康僧会
Kong	空
Konghou	箜篌
Ku	苦
Kushuitula	库水吐刺
Lashaosi	拉梢寺
Lanzhou	兰州
Laozi	老子
Leshan	乐山
Letian	乐天
Le Tinghuai	乐庭瓌
Leigong	雷公

Lengjiajing	楞伽经
Li Bai	李白
Li Cunsui	李存遂
Li Gongling	李公麟
Li Gui	李轨
Li Guonu	李果奴
Li Hao	李昊
Li Jie	李节
Lijun xiu Mogaoku fokaan bei	李君修莫高窟佛龕碑
Li Peng	李鹏
Li Shengtian	李圣天
Lishi	离石
Li Taibin	李太宾
Li Tong	李通
Li Yuanhao	李元昊
Li Yuanxin	李元心
Liantaisi	莲台寺
Liang Kai	梁楷
Liang Xingde	梁幸德
Liangxiu	良琇
Liangzhou	凉州
Lingguan	灵光
Lingtusi	灵图寺
Lingxiu	灵修
Lingyan	凌烟
Lingyin	灵隐
Liu An	刘安
Liu Bin	刘昫
Liudujijing	六度集经
Liuhexue	六合靴

Liujiaxia	刘家峡
Liu Sahe	刘萨河
Liu Sahe heshang yinyuan ji	刘萨河和尚因缘记
Liu Xie	刘勰
Liuyao	六幺
Liu Yilong	刘义隆
Liuyuan	柳园
Liu Yuxi	刘禹锡
Longmen	龙门
Longsuo	龙朔
Longtou	龙头
Longxi	陇西
Longxingsi	龙兴寺
Loulan	楼兰
Lu Guang	吕光
Lu Ji	陆机
Lu Tanwei	陆探微
Lu Xing	吕兴
Lunheng	论衡
Lunwen	论文
Lunyi	论议
Lunyipin	论议品
Lunyu	论语
Luoyang	洛阳
Luo Zhenyu	罗振玉
Ma Sizhong	马思忠
Mawangdui	马王堆
Maijishan	麦极山
Man yi rong di	蛮夷戎狄

Maoxian	贸县
Mao Yanshou	毛延寿
Mengxun	蒙逊
Mianyang	绵阳
Miaofa lianhua jing	妙法莲华经
Mile shangsheng jing	弥勒上生经
Mile xiasheng chengfo jing	弥勒下生成佛经
Miti	密体
Miyanjing	密严经
Mingdai	明代
Mingwang	明王
Mingshashan	鸣沙山
Mogao	莫高
Mogao Yulin erku zakao	莫高榆林二窟杂考
Moheyang	摩诃衍
Nanjing	南京
Nanyang	南阳
Nianyun	廿韵
Nie Chengyuan	聂承远
Nuwa	女娲
Nuo Qiang	诺羌
Pei Chen	裴岑
Pei Ju	裴矩
Peng Jian	彭坚
Pidian	辟电
Pipa	琵琶
Piyu	譬喻

Pingwang	平王
Pohu	破胡
Pomo bianwen	破魔变文
Puguangsi	普光寺
Puguangwangsi	普光王寺
Puqianqiu	卜千秋
Pusachutai jing	菩萨处胎经
Qilijian	七里涧
Qilian	齐连
Qishan bahai	七山八海
Qianfo	千佛
Qianfodong	千佛洞
Qianning	乾宁
Qianyuansi	乾元寺
Qinjin	亲近
Qinjinpin	亲近品
Qinglong	青龙
Qingshang	清商
Qingshangji	清商伎
Qingshen huchi	情深护持
Qingtai	清泰
Qu Yuan	屈原
Qun	裙
Ren Dayu shan	人大于山
Ren jie keyi wei Yao Shun	人皆可以为尧舜
Renwuzhi	人物志
Renxiao	仁孝

Renzong	仁宗
Ruan Ji	阮籍
Ruan Xian	阮咸
Ruixiangsi	瑞像寺
Saiweng	塞翁
Sanbao	三宝
Sandai guanding guoshi	三代灌顶国师
Sangang	三纲
Ganjiejiao	三阶教
Sanjiesi	三阶寺
Sanqian daqian shijie	三千大千世界
Santanting	散檀厅
Sanweishan	三危山
Sanyuanfa	三远法
Sengyuanhua	僧园花
Sengzhihu	僧祇户
Shananxi	陕西
Shandong	山东
Shanmian qiang	扇面墙
Shanshan	鄯善
Shanshi	善事
Shanxi	山西
Shangyuan	上元
Shazhou	沙州
Shewu'ai jing	摄无碍经
Shenlong	神龙
Shensi	神思
Shensifeiyang	神思飞扬
Sheng	笙

Shengguangsi	圣光寺
Shengli	圣历
Shengren chu Huanghe qing	圣人出黄河清
Shicheng	石城
Shi Chongji	史崇姬
Shi Hu	石虎
Shiku	石窟
Shiliuguan	十六观
Shishuo xinyu	世说新语
Shi Siming	史思明
Shi Weixiang	史苇湘
Shi Xiaoyu	史小玉
Shi Yutian ji	使于阗记
Shule	疏勒
Shuti	疏体
Sichuan	四川
Siyi fantian wen jing	思益梵天问经
Songshan	嵩山
Song Yao	宋繇
Song Yun	宋云
Su Shi	苏轼
Suishu	隋书
Sule	疏勒
Suzhou	肃州
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Suo Xun	索勋
Suo Yibian	索义孳
Taihe	太和
Taipingxingguo	太平兴国
Taiwu	太武
Taiyan	太延
Taiyuan	太原
Taizong	太宗
Tankuang	昙旷
Tanyan	昙延
Tang	唐
Tangshu	唐书
Teyishili	特义尸利
Tianbao	天宝
Tianfu	天福
Tian qingwen jing	天请问经
Tianma	天马
Tianhui	天会
Tianlong babu	天龙八部
Tianse	填色
Tiansheng	天圣
Tianshui	天水
Tianti	天梯
Tianwen	天问
Tianyou	天佑
Tianzhu yifa	天竺遗法
Tongguang	同光
Tubo	吐蕃
Tujue	突厥

Tuse	涂色
Tuyugou	吐峪沟
Tunhu	吞胡
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Wan pusa lou	万菩萨楼
Wansui	万岁
Wang Ande	王安德
Wang Anshi	王安石
Wang Chong	王充
Wang Gong	王恭
Wang Rong	王戎
Wang Shanu	王沙女
Wang Wan	王万
Wang Wei	王维
Wang Xuance	王玄策
Wang Yanshou	王延寿
Wang Yi	王逸
Wang Yuanlu	王圆箎
Wang Zhaojun	王昭君
Wei	魏
Weichi Yiseng	尉迟已僧
Weishengyuan	未生怨
Weishi	唯识
Wendi	文帝
Wenshu	文殊
Wensu	文素
Wenxin dialong	文心雕龙
Wenzong	文宗

Wubi	坞壁
Wu Daozi	吴道子
Wude	武德
Wuhuo	乌获
Wukong	悟空
Wushanxian	武山县
Wusun	乌孙
Wutai	五台
Wutaishan xianhua tu	五台山现化图
Wuwei	武威
Wuzhen	悟真
Wu Zetian	武则天
Xi'an	西安
Xianhuatu	现化图
Xidang	西宕
Xiguo xingzhuan	西国行传
Xihe	熹和
Xiliang yue	西凉乐
Xi'ning	西宁
Xi qianfodong	西千佛洞
Xishanqiao	西善桥
Xiwangmu	西王母
Xixia	西夏
Xiyu	西域
Xixhou	西州
Xiazhou	夏州
Xianbei	鲜卑
Xiandesi	显德寺
Xiantong	咸通

Xianyan	仙岩
Xianyu jing	贤愚经
Xianzong	显宗
Xiang Da	向达
Xiangguosi	相国寺
Xianghu	象护
Xiangque	饕佉
Xiangshan	香山
Xiangyinshen	香音神
Xiaochang	孝昌
Xiaoguan	萧关
Xiaojing	孝经
Xiao qianfodong	小千佛洞
Xiaoqian shijie	小千世界
Xiaowen	孝文
Xiaoxiao	小小
Xiaoyang	孝养
Xiaoyangpin	孝养品
Xincheng	新城
Xinhua	新华
Xinjiang	新疆
Xinxing	信行
Xinyuan Yima	心猿意马
Xingshan	兴善
Xingxiangde lishi	形像的历史
Xiongnu	匈奴
Xiuxing benqi jing	修行本起经
Xu Beihong	徐悲鸿
Xubofo	须波佛
Xuda qijingpin	须达起精品

Xu gaosengzhuan	续高僧传
Xumizuo	须弥座
Xumishan	须弥山
Xupin	序品
Xuanquan	悬泉
Xuanwu	玄武
Xuanzong	玄宗
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Yanchang	延昌
Yanhe	延和
Yan Liben	阎立本
Yanxingsi	延兴寺
Yanzai	延载
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Yangguan	阳关
Yangguanchu	阳关曲
Yang Huizhi	杨惠之
Yangmu	阳木
Yangshui	阳水
Yao Zui	姚最
Yibole pusa	伊波勒菩萨
Yijing	义净
Yi'nan	沂南
Yishu	艺术

Yiwu	伊吾
Yin	阴
Yin Bolun	阴伯伦
Yincheng	淫城
Yin chushigong xiu gongde ji	阴处士公修功德记
Yin Jiazheng	阴嘉政
Yinzu	阴祖
Yong'ansi	永安寺
Yonggui	雍归
Yonghe	永和
Youzhou	幽州
Yucheng	玉城
Yulin	榆林
Yumenguan	玉门关
Yuren	羽人
Yushi	雨师
Yushuquan	玉疏泉
Yu Yi	于义
Yu Youren	于右任
Yuan	元
Yuande	元德
Yuanhong	元宏
Yuan Rong	元荣
Yuan Shen	元深
Yuan Tairong	元太荣
Yuan Zhong	元忠
Yuezhi	月支
Yue Zun	乐尊
Yun'gang	云岗

Zaichu	载初
Zao	藻
Zaojing	藻井
Zioqide Mogao Yishu	早期的莫高艺术
Zhai Dingzi	翟定子
Zhai Farong	翟法荣
Zhai Fengda	翟奉达
Zhai Huixin	翟讳信
Zhai Shankou	翟善口
Zhai Shende	翟神德
Zhai Siyuan	翟思远
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Zhenguan	贞观
Zhenzhou	镇州
Zheng	箏
Zhengde	正德
Zhengding	正定
Zheng Fashi	郑法士
Zhihuashou	知画手
Zhishushou	知书手
Zhiyuan Tuji	祗园图记
Zhiyuan yinyou ji	祗园因由记
Zhizheng	至正
Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu	中国大百科全书
Zhong Kui	钟馗
Zhongqian shijie	中千世界
Zhongzong	中宗
Zhou Enlai	周恩来
Zhou Fang	周昉
Zhu Bao	竺保
Zhu Fahu	竺法护
Zhu Gaozuo	竺高作
Zhulin qixian tu	竹林七贤图
Zhuangzi	庄子



Zidijun  
Ziting  
Zongjiao

子弟军  
紫亭  
宗教

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