

CHARACTERISTICS OF HERCULES AND BODHISATTVA LONGMEN GROTTO STATUES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW (SLR)

Li Xiaoshu^{1*}, Mohd Johari Mohd Yusof¹, Ser Wue Hiong¹, Velu Perumal¹, Wang Xiufeng²

¹Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²School of Arts and Science of SUST, Shaanxi University of Science and Technology, Xi'an, China

Abstract. Grotto arts is gradually altered due to various reasons, such as time and environmental impact. The Longmen Grottoes, notably in the 2000 World Heritage List, is one of the affected grottoes. Several façades of Longmen Grotto Buddha statues are fading and unrecognisable. Therefore, the original characteristics of these Buddha statues were explored for restoration and reference. First, the exploration of Hercules and Bodhisattva statue characteristics in Longmen Grottoes used a systematic literature review (SLR). Second, Hercules statues in the Northern Wei Dynasty were found to exhibit the Central Plains Style, while the Bodhisattvas in Tang Dynasty bears more resemblance to the façade of “secularisation”. The historical Buddhist and art preservation for prospective appreciation might better be considered as grotto arts, which originated from India and flourished in China, are remarkable treasures clothing and be an essential step to achieving sustainability in the apparel industry.

Keywords: *Bodhisattva, grotto arts, Hercules, statue characteristics, SLR.*

Corresponding Author: Li Xiaoshu, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Tel: 011696-3904, e-mail: lixiaoshu8706@126.com

Received: 21 April 2022;

Accepted: 12 July 2022;

Published: 3 August 2022.

1. Introduction

Based on Buddhist classics, Buddhist grotto sculpture art created by craftsmen in the past is a product of history. Scholars and experts have thoroughly studied the Buddha statues in the Longmen Grottoes, specifically on Buddha statue styles and categories. Nevertheless, research on these statues is still in its infancy due to incomplete data. Following the statue inception in China, it was reported that the appearance of men as engraved in the statues began to demonstrate several femininity aspects. The inclusion of femininity aspects through appearance and posture could be demonstrated across statues erected during the Tang Dynasty. Daoxuan, an eminent monk of the Tang Dynasty, highlighted that these statues were called “lovely girls in the palace” in the *Collection on the Explanation of Buddhism*.

The shapes and figures of these historical statues quickly became less visible due to time and environmental impact. Many of these statues did not resemble their original conditions because some parts of the statues were stolen and exhibited in many museums across the world. It will be such a great loss to the local Chinese heritage if these invaluable treasures are not being conserved and preserved. Nevertheless, thorough studies could incorporate the original statue characteristics for restoration. Therefore, a research was carried out to identify the characteristics of Longmen Grotto

statues by specifically focusing on two types of statues, namely, Hercules and Bodhisattva.

In Buddhism, Hercules is usually known as the powerful Buddhist guardian who plays the role of “protector”. As such, this depiction bears a resemblance to the traditional Han Chinese culture, “Door God”. In Chinese, Bodhisattva is termed “Pusa”, an abbreviated pronunciation of “Putisa”. Both word-level particles demonstrate cultural meanings: “Puti” means consciousness and “Sa” refers to sentient beings who could generate emotions and consciousness. Bodhisattvas are typically gods that are supported by Buddhism, a foreign religion.

The Hercules and Bodhisattva statues today did not resemble the earliest constructions. First, the exotic “Hercules” statue saw growth during the excavation of the Longmen Grottoes. Specifically, the Hercules statue style began to evolve and develop significantly in the Longmen Grottoes. Second, the depictions of young men in the early Bodhisattva statue period were soon replaced with depictions of gentle, elegant, beautiful, and mellow female features. As such, the current physical statue characteristics resembled a feminine posture and skin colour that contradicted the original version of Bodhisattvas (Su Min, 2011). Resultantly, the Chinese Buddhist Bodhisattva statues are usually equated with the ideals of compassion, kind-heartedness, and the willingness to save the world, consistent with the psychology of Chinese women. Therefore, both Hercules and Bodhisattva statues demonstrated a physical transition.

2. Methodology

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was used as a method to explore the original characteristics of Hercules and Bodhisattva statues. SLR is an innovative research method that provides comprehensive knowledge. The SLR is executed using specific research purposes, questions, and strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Thus, irrelevant documents were removed.

Chinese authoritative search engines were used to generate relevant articles as the research involved Chinese grotto sculptures of Hercules and Bodhisattvas. China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Data Knowledge Service Platform, and Google Scholar were used to generate articles. First, CNKI is the most comprehensive website in China that generates academic literature, specifically core and professional journals. The CNKI is characterised by its authoritativeness, effectiveness in retrieval, and comprehensiveness in journal types and local content. Second, Wanfang Data compiled core journals that comprised statistical sources by the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology. The number of core journals is high and the high-quality documents are recent. Figure 1 shows the processes involved in retrieving the articles, specifically using 1) identification, 2) screening, and 3) article eligibility verification techniques. The search was completed on 20th of August 2021 with retrieved 66 articles from both databases.

All articles were considered because investigation on grotto statues progress annually. Nevertheless, conference proceedings, book chapters, and books were excluded. Two article duplicates, including non-English and non-Chinese reading materials, were removed. The irrelevant publication and case studies that failed to yield contributions on grotto statues were also eliminated. Finally, the publication that was narrowed down were verified to assess if they fit the investigation objectives and made

connections to Longmen grottoes. Table 1 demonstrates the relevant keywords used to generate articles. Table 2 demonstrates 62 articles that were selected based on the criteria.

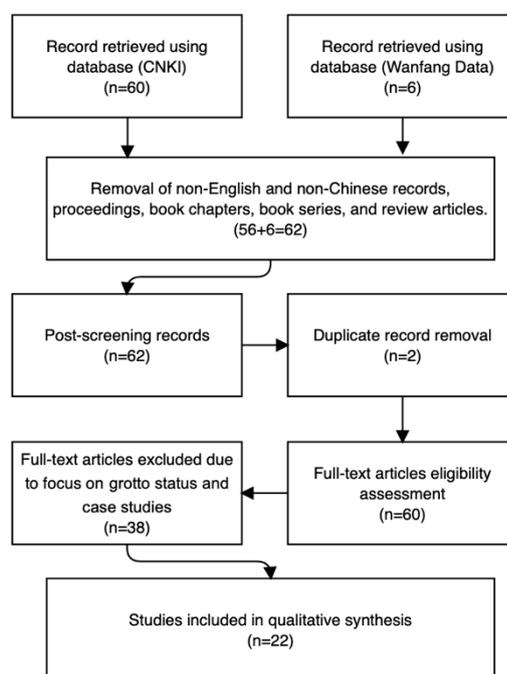


Fig. 1. Operationalisation of the study

Table 1. Search strings

Database search string (keywords)	
CNKI	"Hercules Statues": "Tang Dynasty" AND "Bodhisattva" AND "Longmen Grottoes" "Avalokitesvara Statues": "Buddhist Statues" AND "Style Comparison" AND "Grotto Statues" AND "Style Research" AND "Buddhist Images" AND "Tang Dynasty Bodhisattvas" AND "Longmen Grottoes" AND "Buddha Statues"
Wanfang Data	"Hercules Statues": "Tang Dynasty" AND "Bodhisattva" AND "Longmen Grottoes" "Avalokitesvara Statues": "Buddhist Statues" AND "Style Comparison" AND "Grotto Statues" AND "Style Research" AND "Buddhist Images" AND "Tang Dynasty Bodhisattvas" AND "Longmen Grottoes" AND "Buddha Statues"

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Recency	Publication recency was not considered	
Document types	Peer-reviewed articles	Conference proceedings, book chapters, book series, and books
Language	English and Chinese	Non-English and non-Chinese
Content	Relevant to investigation and case studies on grotto statues	Irrelevant to investigation and case studies on grotto statues

Reviewed publications that involved 60 article titles, abstracts, and content ensured compliance with the inclusion requirements. A total of 38 articles was excluded due to the lack of relevant content and case studies on grotto statues. Finally, a total of 22 articles was eligible for analysis.

ATLAS.ti software was employed to analyse the related articles. Two steps were used in the analysis: First, a vocabulary cloud or list was generated to compare and finalise the most frequently used words in each article. The most frequent vocabulary items determined the core content. Second, the articles were imported into ATLAS.ti and the goals were set to reflect the primary and secondary article coding that emphasised a “more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the Hercules and the Bodhisattva”. A cross-comparative analysis of the content focused on the two-level coding and high-frequency vocabulary. Finally, the remaining finalised publications 1) explored the original characteristics of the statues in different eras and 2) provided textual support for subsequent digital art restoration.

3. Findings and discussion

Hercules

The academic research reported on Hercules statues could be divided into two categories:

(1) Emphasis on i) textual research that investigated the concepts, ii) statue sources, iii) overall statue development.

Li Baihua (2000) systematically explained the characteristics and development of the Hercules. First, the characteristics, origins, and functions of Hercules and Caturmahārājakayikas statues in Northern Wei, Sui and Tang Dynasties were briefly discussed. Second, the historical and evolution processes were studied to explore the Buddhist sculpture and culture in-depth. The compiled relevant materials on Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen Grottoes were analysed based on comparative methods. Furthermore, Weng Jianqing (2011) focused on gradual change. Connections between Yakṣa, Hercules, Caturmahārājakayikas statue cultural connotations, and Buddhist Dharma protectors were made. The eastward spread of Buddhism was considered a form of religion, art, and culture.

Finally, Weng Jianqing investigated original Western depiction records of Hercules after it was introduced in China. Li Ling's (2014) research focused on the early Vajrapani image that prompted a study on the original Hercules statue. It particularly enhanced the depiction of Guhyapāda vajrah holding the Vajra pestle, an image of Hercules statue earliest appearance. Arguably, the Hercules statue was developed from Guhyapāda vajrah in the local Indian culture. Thus, Guhyapāda Vajra was portrayed as holding Vajra pestle and other magic weapons to protect the Buddhist court, as expressed in the early Hercules statues. Finally, Li Chongfeng (2019) described the development and changes of Indian Hercules statues concerning Buddhist scriptures and Chinese Hercules images.

(2) Emphasis on case studies involving Hercules statue remnants in China.

The following conclusions were drawn based on investigations concerning i) Hercules statues in Kucina Grottoes, ii) Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen Grottoes, and 3) Qixiashan Grottoes in Nanjing:

Huo Xuchu's (2016) investigation reported three important points. First, the earliest appearing Buddhist remains in the western regions were considered clues to examine the evolution of Central Asian and Indian Buddhist culture. Second, the early Vajrapani statues were influenced by foreign cultures and western region typical performance and modelling characteristics. Third, the Chinese and Western subcultures reported a close relationship while a weakened influence of China-Western relationships

was observed in the east of Kucina. On the one hand, Lin Lingai (2008) described an early modelling of Buddhist Hercules characteristics in northern China, especially a record of transition in clothing and expressions.

On the other hand, Li Ying (2014) analysed the changes in Hercules depictions across Dunhuang Grottoes following the introduction in China. A bold interpretation was made concerning Hercules and Chinese cultural dance by incorporating images of dancing. Furthermore, Mao Ning (2004) reported a similar transition of characteristics between Caturmahārājakayikas and Hercules in Longmen Grotto statues. Resultantly, Buddhist art was developed through the influence of a past foreign culture that continued to be localised and unholy in China. Mao Ning (2004) concluded that Hercules statue development was associated with the shift in Buddhist doctrines, Sinicization of grotto architecture, and the simplification of grotto decoration. Therefore, Hercules statues enriched grotto contents and guided the audience attention.

Li Chongfeng (2013) and Yuan Qiushi (2015) analysed Longmen Hercules statue typology and the Hercules morphological characteristics in Longmen Grottoes. Summaries were presented on the rationale and historical background façade surrounding Hercules statues. Preliminary explanations provided the theoretical achievements of history, iconology, and art. Meanwhile, Wang Ping and Feng Yun (2015) investigated the rise and fall of Caturmahārājakayikas and Hercules in Longmen Grottoes. The image evolution involving Caturmahārājakayikas and Hercules depictions in Longmen Grottoes were compared. Finally, Wang Dong (2015) took the Tuolin temple in Tibet as an example and divided the Tibetan images of Hercules into two periods, namely, the 11th and 15th centuries. Wang Dong (2015) concluded that the Tibetan images of Hercules depicted a close association between Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Buddhism. The contextual information on the study of Hercules is shown in Table 3.

Hercules statue characteristics in representative niches of the Northern Wei Dynasty

At the beginning of Middle Binyang Cave, the statues of Hercules were carved on both sides (He Yangming, 1981). The full statue was 4.5 meters high. The two statues of Hercules were the earliest appearing guardian images in the Longmen caves during Northern Wei Dynasty. There was only quite well-preserved Hercules statues in the northern cave. Nevertheless, the south side of Hercules statue suffered substantial damage.

The following lists demonstrated the existing Hercules statue characteristics as depicted in the picture on the left: 1) a simple head crown, 2) round and protruding eyes, 3) a right-facing flat face, and 4) a ring of light behind the head (the remaining colours were still vaguely visible). The austere-looking Hercules statue 1) had a collapsed nose and tightly-closed lips, 2) wore silk scarf, 3) held vajra pestle using the left hand, 5) set the vajra pestle at the waist, 6) elevated right hand parallel to the chest with five fingers raised into a palm-like shape, 7) raised an outward-looking palm, 8) commanded a stern, guardian-like spirit, 9) donned a long silk dress, 10) dressed in an overlaid silk scarf from the knee down, 11) demonstrated open feet standing position, and 12) had a barefoot standing position on a lotus seat. Finally, the main statue austerity was expressed through the tight crossed arm muscles and the raised tendons on the feet. To a large extent, the main statue austerity was also enhanced through the dramatic proportions and the exaggerated look of jealousy. The Hercules statue as

demonstrated in the picture on the left shows the “guardian-enhancing” power of physical pulchritude.

Table 3. Contextual information on the study of Hercules

Authors	Characteristics								Year of excavation	Reason of excavation	Niche
	Eye	Nose	Mouth	Face	Ear	Clothes	Body shapes	Cutting technology			
Li Baihua (2000)		√			√		√	√	√	√	√
Weng Jianqing (2011)									√	√	√
Li Ling (2014)							√		√	√	
Li Chongfeng (2019)	√	√	√	√	√			√	√		
Huo xuchu (2016)							√		√	√	
Lin lingai (2008)	√	√	√	√	√	√					√
Li Ying (2014)							√	√	√		√
Mao Ning (2004)	√	√	√	√	√	√		√			√
Yuan Qiushi (2015)									√	√	√
Wang Ping et al. (2015)									√	√	√
Wang Dong (2015)										√	√
He Yangming (1981)	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√



Fig. 2. The Hercules in Middle Binyang Cave

Although the powerful Hercules statue in the picture on the right was severely affected, the statue remnants made the following characteristics visible: 1) a simple crown donned on the head, 2) a look-to-the-left facial expression, simultaneously facing north in Hercules direction, 3) a ring of light on the back of the head, 4) the belt attached to the crown moved in the wind direction, and 5) similar styling and posture

identical to the Hercules statue on the north, namely, a barefoot standing position on a lotus seat. It could be deduced from the costumes and artefacts in the hands that the Middle Binyang Cave Hercules statues bore a resemblance to the typical Hercules depiction in Northern Wei Dynasty at Longmen Grottoes.

In the north of the entrance of Lotus cave, two Hercules statues were erected in Northern Wei Dynasty. As time went by, the two statues were seriously damaged and the statue heads were no longer visible. Nevertheless, the remnants of the statues bore similar characteristics to the Northern Wei Dynasty statues: 1) dressed in a wide sleeve and heavy silk robe which is a typical example of ample gown with a loose girdle commonly found among the Northern Wei Dynasty statues, 2) donned unrevealing clothes, 3) conjured a dynamic bodily image through a decorative flowy pattern. The formation of the image akin to the “Central Plains Style” bore a resemblance to the process of the rise of the Longmen Hercules statue. The flourishing Hercules statues in the Northern Wei Dynasty may reflect the resistance against revealing the human bodies (Mao Ning, 2004).



Fig. 3. The Hercules in Lotus cave

Reportedly, when art forms were adequately developed, they would disappear following the release of new ones. This substitution of old with new art forms applied to the depictions of Dharma guards outside the gate of Wei Zi Cave which was excavated 523 years ago (in the fourth year during the Zhengguang reign of emperor Xiaoming of Northern Wei Dynasty). Hercules of Wei Zidong was garbed in a thick and huge silk dressing gown, a statue clad in an appropriate body-proportionate gown. As such, Hercules of Wei Zidong appeared in stark contrast to other Hercules statue in Northern Wei Dynasty who was exaggerated and deformed-looking.

A bare upper body and arms reflected the Hercules of Wei Zidong strength. The decorative patterns of the clothes on the body only appeared in the patterns of long skirts. Moreover, the pattern no longer demonstrated the natural and elegant flowing effect but appeared to depict body-fitting clothes. Despite the statue austerity, the knife technique was reported to have turned around. The unique decorative effect produced by the straight knife method in carving Grottoes is a prominent feature of the “Central Plains Style”. As such, the round knife method gave the statue profound effects to make the image real and vivid. The straight knife to round knife transformation was also a sign of transition between the Northern Wei Dynasty to Northern Qi Dynasty.

On the south side of the Bianzhou cave entrance, which was excavated in the late Northern Wei Dynasty (550 A.D.), the image of Hercules appeared in a bare upper body

that was clad in a long skirt with a belt around his waist. The long skirt with smooth pleats and remarkable strength swayed on the ground. The Hercules leaned sideways as if the statue was facing the cave door while raising his left arm and hand. The figure further showed his extended right arm, half clenched fist, straightened left leg, and arched right leg to mimic a guarded posture (Longmen Grottoes Research Institute, 1993, P128). Based on the modelling, the statue of Hercules at this time eliminated glimpses of rigid Hercules modelled statue in the early Northern Wei Dynasty. The expression of Hercules statue was exaggerated and powerful, a strong feeling that resembled Tang Dynasty statue.



Fig. 4. The Hercules in Wei Zi Cave

The Hercules statues in the early, middle, and late Northern Wei Dynasty were all characterised by a figure holding a diamond pestle. Nevertheless, how Hercules was dressed shifted from a figure wearing full-body clothes and skirts to a bare upper body figure with silk on the shoulders. Similarly, the portrayal of Hercules holding a Vajra pestle on one hand and holding a three-pronged fork on the other hand, was changed to an image of Hercules holding a Vajra pestle in one hand and elevating one hand parallel to the chest (Li Baihua, 2000).

Bodhisattva

The universal appeal of Bodhisattva spirit of compassion accommodates believers' desire to eliminate suffering through gods (Liu Lili, 2004). The articles analysed in this paper mainly focus on the description of the five senses. The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara (Junfang *et al.*, 2009) demonstrated an in-depth summary and research on the processes and justification for the male-to-female transition of Avalokiteśvara. The complexion of Bodhisattva was compared to snow; the body was bright and white, and the skin was soft and delicate. The skin was elastic akin to an appearance of a double beauty of vision and touch. The equally beautiful woman, Ānanda, had bronzed skin.

As early as more than two thousand years ago, *The Book of Songs* (Sun Zuoyun, 2003) through “Dengtuzi Erotic Rhapsody” once defined what “beauty” meant: “The hands are fair, like the buds of imperata cylindrica. The skin is white and delicate, like solidified oil”. Song Yu (2016) also depicted “the kid of Dong family” as possessing “skin” that “is as clear and clean as snow, and the waist is as thin as wrapped in silk in “Dong Xiang”. Su Shi (2013) described that beauty is equated with the ideals of “skin

is like ice, body bones are like jade” in “Jia Ren”. Bao Minjie (2016) described the beautiful appearance as “beautiful as a jade beautiful woman” in “Luoyang Daughter’s Tour”. Zhang Hongjuan (2017) asked that “who will pity the beautiful Xi Tz?” in “Chang Hen Ge”. Bai Juyi (2015) who depicted Yang Yuhuan beauty once said: “The skin is fair as snow, and the face is as beautiful as a flower”. These ancient poems used analogies to compare women’s skin to ice and jade to describe what beauty meant. Thus, “white” and “delicate skin” might have been understood as a basic Chinese traditional and cultural requirement of women’s beauty.

The ancient records also exhibited a description of five female sense organs, a description that profoundly affected Chinese people’s requirements for female beauty. The description of the organs was also applied to depict Bodhisattva. “Li Sao” once said that “many women are jealous of my beautiful, crooked eyebrows; many women spread rumours and slander, saying that I like immorality” (Wen Yucheng, 2004). “Su Zhongqing” also said that “paint your eyebrows as long as a distant mountain” (Zhang Guibin, 2015). “Xijing Zaji” wrote that “Zhuo Wenjun’s eyebrows are as beautiful as distant mountains” (Zhao Youfeng, 2017). Resultantly, “beauty” and “mountain” were used to describe women’s eyebrows. Thus, the slender the female eyebrows, the greater the appreciation.

The ancient records indicated the preoccupation with “small cherry mouth” and “red lips as red” to describe women’s lips. Specifically, women’s beauty was measured by the following description, small, plump, bright, shiny lips from various shapes and colours (Su Min, 2011). The description of lips appeared with the following depictions: 1) the face is like a full moon and 2) the slightly closed eyes. Thus, Chinese classical aesthetics was involved in defining female beauty specifically in formulating descriptions about Bodhisattva. Clothing patterns and carving techniques as appeared in many Buddhist statue monuments were often built using explicit contemporary and regional styles (Liu Lili, 2004). The patterns, styles, and techniques took after the foreign Buddhist art and early Buddhist stone statues. The-then local and traditional ethnic customs and carving arts were also adopted.

Analyses of Tang Dynasty characteristics of Bodhisattvas are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Tang Dynasty characteristics of Bodhisattvas

Authors	Characteristics								Year of excavation	Reason of excavation	Niche
	Eye	Nose	Mouth	Face	Ear	Clothes	Body shape	Cutting technology			
Liu Lili (2004)	√	√	√	√	√					√	√
Yu Junfang et al. (2009)							√	√	√	√	
Sun Zuoyun (2003)				√			√				
Song Yu (2016)				√			√				
Bao Minjie (2016)							√				√
Zhang Hongjuan (2017)							√				
Wen Yucheng (2004)	√	√	√	√							
Zhang Guibin (2015)	√							√			√
Zhao Youfeng (2017)	√						√	√			√
Su Min (2011)			√					√			

The Bodhisattva statue characteristics in the Representative Niches of the Tang Dynasty

In Qianxi Temple, the Attendant Bodhisattvas were Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. In Tang Dynasty, the Guanshiyin Bodhisattva was called Guanyin Bodhisattva because the name, Taizong Li Shimin, was considered taboo. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva held *kalasa* in her left hand and lotus in her right hand. The Mahāsthāmaprāpta stood on the lotus platform, wearing a crown of flowers and vines, and a gem-centred crown. There are gourd-shaped decorations on the shoulders and round beads on the neck. The left hand held an orb, with lotus petals on the interior and flame patterns on the exterior. The attendant Bodhisattvas' underwear collars were carved using implicit and introverted round patterns.

The front of the coat was carved with round three-dimensional patterns, and corsage-like ornaments were seen around the waist. As such, the patterns and ornaments blended with the clothes and revealed the waistline. The placket extended downward through the corsage. The garment pattern was orderly and slowly drooping, two folds were formed on the shoulder, and the cuffs were tightened. The overall clothing modelling depicted an orderly, elegant manner and demonstrated the tenderness of women. The two Bodhisattvas had high buns on their head, with three silk knot patterns on the neck, chain-shaped necklaces, and ring-shaped necklaces on the chest. The braided keyūra fell from the shoulders to the front of the abdomen and crossed, and the legs naturally were separated to the outside. The scarf surrounded the shoulders from left to right and straightly dropped down to the bottom of the seat. The body was graceful and plump, the expression was kind and quiet, and the face was beautiful. The whole body from the head to the waist showed an elegant curve and unmatched statue characteristics in the early and prosperous Tang Dynasty. The statues of Longmen Grottoes in the prosperous Tang Dynasty were dominated by royal statues. Therefore, some Bodhisattva costumes mirrored the dress of the royal nobles.



Fig. 5. The Bodhisattva in Qianxi Temple

In Fengxian Temple, the two Attendant Bodhisattvas stood on both sides of Mahakassapa and Ananda. The left side is known as Manjusri Bodhisattva, and the right side is Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. The two Bodhisattvas held up their right and left elbows respectively, with palms slightly concaved. The other arm was drooped naturally and their posture changed implicitly. The Bodhisattva's head was donned with an exquisitely carved crown and the complicated pattern mirrored the ideals of nobility. Manjusri Bodhisattva's chest was decorated with keyūra, and the belt around his waist was inlaid with jewellery. The skirt was carved with patterns of flowers, and the skirt was gracefully and attractively stacked up to the sole of his feet. The dress of

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, as opposed to Manjusri Bodhisattva, was slightly simpler. The body was covered with silk, the ornaments on the chest were hung down to the knees, the pleats between the legs were dense, the waist was equipped with a belt carved with blurry patterns. The two Bodhisattvas, Manjusri and Samantabhadra, were all dressed in gorgeous costumes that were accompanied by keyūra as an ornament, a physique that was exaggerating and deforming. Thus, the two Bodhisattvas emphasised the beauty of curves by exaggeratedly deforming the body and showing images of elegant noblewomen to demonstrate that "Bodhisattvas are like children in the palace".



Fig. 6. The Bodhisattva in Fengxian Temple

The Bodhisattva statue images in the Tang Dynasty were mostly modelled by beauties in the upper-class society. Simultaneously, they integrated the-then aesthetics and pursued elegant and graceful styles. Bodhisattva's facial appearance and figure demonstrated the centrality of "plump muscles and elegant bones" that appeared with smooth lines. The face shape was deconstructed to show the transition from oblong to round in the early stage. The figure was plump and made explicit three s-shaped bends. There were four shallows on the neck and arm, namely, double chin. The magnificent and bright dress was dignified, beautiful, gorgeous, and charming.

The clothing features of Bodhisattva statues demonstrated the following characteristics: 1) The upper body was covered with a very intricate keyūra and scarf that was hung down and horizontally folded between the chest and abdomen, 2) the upper body was half-naked and slightly covered with keyūra that revealed naked chest and arm, and 3) the lower body was covered with a long body-fitted skirt, 4) a phoenix crown or a high bun finished the look. A drooping belt, as opposed to a flying outward belt of the crown, was reported. Hair was hung from the shoulders. The Bodhisattva statues demonstrated a round and plump face, phoenix-like eyes, and red lips. The statue neck was thick with silkworm knots. The whole body was graceful, charming, and solemn. Therefore, the dress of Bodhisattva truly mirrored the dress of noblewomen and presented the characteristics of unholiness, as she began to take root in the fertile soil of Chinese culture.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Hercules statues, it can be argued that Hercules statues emphasised the depictions of Central Plains which can be reflected in the following three points: First, the round knife method, as opposed to straight knife method cutting

technology, was central in generating portrayals of realistic and vivid statues. Second, the statues were depicted as being garbed in a loose gown with a wide girdle in an unrevealing manner. The decorative flowy clothes depicted the dynamics of the body shapes. Lastly, the overall image could reflect 11 physical characteristics: 1) hair crown, 2) eyes gleaming with rage, 3) small mouth opening, 4) concave-convex neck mirroring tree trunks, 5) keyūra on the neck, 6) upward and downward arm bending posture, 7) bare chest and abdomen structure, 8) a structure wrapped in fluttering gown, 9) bare feet and below-patella areas, 10) fluttering belt, and 11) band-wrapped upper arm, wrist, and ankle.

The exquisite statues of Buddhist Hercules in Longmen Grottoes beginning in the Northern Wei Dynasty to Tang Dynasty are rich Chinese cultural heritage and arts. The statues in question are accorded special historical positions in Chinese Buddhism. Although the statue characteristics inherited the Indian Gandhara and Yungang grottoes, the statues exhibited Central Plains cultural influence. Resultantly, the statues are generally regarded as products of various cultural integration. Therefore, statues of Buddhist Hercules in Longmen Grottoes are examples of a representation of an initial nationally recognised Chinese Grotto Art.

The early Bodhisattva statues which originated from Gandhara of India reported a preoccupation with beards. Similarly, the early Chinese Bodhisattva reported an identical façade comprising beards on lips that were preserved until the late Tang and Five Dynasties. In other words, before Tang Dynasty, most Bodhisattva statues demonstrated male characteristics with beards on their lips. Nevertheless, they were soon replaced with kind-looking faces, elegant postures, and luxurious clothes that were usually equated with the ideals of compassionate and kind-hearted women beginning in the Song Dynasty. In the Tang Dynasty, Bodhisattva was depicted as more feminine and unholy, a statue that depicted a beautiful woman with a bare chest and arms.

Nevertheless, it was reported that the womanly looking statue did not violate the doctrines. The depiction demonstrated a female body that painted a little green beard on her lips, combed her hair in a bun, possessed a plump face and thin-arched eyebrows, an image that mirrored Tang Dynasty palace maids. Other works of literature reported that the statue portrayed the following characteristics: 1) half-closed, implicit, and deep Asian eyes, 2) a pretty nose and close cherry-looking mouth, 3) the mouth was upturned with a smile, a depiction equivalent to an illustration of gentleness and kind-heartedness, 4) a slightly curved body, 5) graceful and quiet, a depiction equivalent to an illustration of noble temperament, 6) gorgeous and body-fitted clothes embroidered with undulating patterns, a portrayal synonymous to showing superior silk textures. As such, Daoxuan, an eminent Tang Dynasty monk, highlighted in the *Collection on the Explanation of Buddhism* that: “in the Song and Qi dynasties (or the Northern Wei Dynasty), the images in painting had thick lips, long nose, long eyes, and their overbearing appearance showed the masculine temperament.”

Since the Tang Dynasty, the writing style was described as less intense and feminine images in paintings flourished to signify “lovely girls in the palace”. Subsequently, Bodhisattvas were depicted in complete femininity in Song Dynasty. First, the Song Dynasty Bodhisattva posture and expression were no longer depicted as natural, vivid, charming, and moving. Second, Song Dynasty statues which were clad in simple and graceful clothing were portrayed as deeply quiet and solemn. The physical appearance, as opposed to Tang Dynasty statues, were no longer bright, rich, pearly, and elegant. Portraits in the Song Dynasty periods were reconstructed to show female bodies

with complete feminine characteristics, although masculine-bearing feminine Bodhisattvas with moustache and tadpole-looking moustache on lips remained a few. In Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, Bodhisattvas were depicted as unholy. As such, the current Bodhisattva statues mirror a kind and austere-looking Oriental goddess, whose appearance incorporates Chinese clothes and resembles a Chinese woman with Chinese aesthetics.

Although the existing Bodhisattva no longer resembles the Bodhisattva mentioned in the *Buddha Statue Measure Sutra*, the current goddess combines several pleasing characteristics: 1) beauty and wisdom and 2) kindness and compassion, four of the many characteristics that emphasise benevolence and greater Chinese aesthetic concepts. The statues are currently worshipped by hundreds of millions of people. Therefore, the existing Bodhisattva statue portrayal may exemplify resilient Chinese culture and the open-mindedness of Chinese aesthetics.

As global historical and cultural heritage sites, Chinese Buddhist grottoes depict the centrality of history, human technology, and cultural manifestations, and the physical remains of human creative activities. To protect Chinese Buddhist grottoes is to protect history and culture, an initiative that preserves excellent tradition. In an increasingly materialised society, protecting Chinese Buddhist grottoes is extremely urgent and important. First, global historical and cultural heritage digitisation is necessary for material, cultural, and heritage preservation. In other words, digital restoration will become a necessary means to safeguard the grotto arts. Second, textual research on existing Buddha statues can provide solid theoretical data for digital restoration, a process that facilitates clear and vivid statue restoration identical to the original conditions. Thus, digital technologies and textual research are inevitably useful in the Chinese Buddhist grotto preservation, reproduction, and restoration.

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