

Inheritance and Innovation of “Vajrapani” in the Grottoes of Bazhong

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Abstract:

Cave paintings have been one of the mapping forms of many cultures since ancient times, and in addition to the four major caves in China, there are also caves scattered in other regions with great characteristics and research value. Therefore, when I came to Sichuan found that the Bazhong Grottoes in the eastern part of Sichuan had very distinctive regional characteristics and a different morphological style, which led me to consult materials and conduct field research, so that knew that the “Vajra Rex” form in the Bazhong Grottoes had developed a unique artistic style with the changes of history, and that The image of “Vajra Rex” is the most frequent image in the grottoes around the country, especially in terms of shape and costume, which inspired my desire to study the grottoes, which were mostly destroyed with the erosion of time. Therefore, hope that by extracting, organizing, and developing the “Vajra Rex” form in the Bazhong Grottoes, extend the theoretical study of the image of Vajra Rex to a combing of theoretical dance forms and provide a reference for future research on the Bazhong Grottoes.

Keywords:

Cave Statue, Vajra Rex, Dance Form

1. The Emergence of the Image of “Vajra Rex” in the Bazhong Caves During the Sui and Tang Dynasties

Since its inception, the “Rex” figure has had a special status, initially as a quiet Bodhisattva and as a warrior Vajra, one of the protectors of the Dharma, whose role is to protect the Buddha and listen to his words. A small number of statues appear under the Buddha’s throne. Because of their strength and the fact that they often accompanied the Buddha, they were given the task of blocking the invasion of various spirits and pagans and were given the post of guards [8]. With the change of dynasties, historical changes, and the long evolution of Buddhism in the east, the image of Rex gradually developed into one of the most artistically expressive features in China. The Sichuan Grottoes occupy an important position among China’s cave temples, and it is an important representative of the Southern Grottoes. The Bazhong Grottoes are the most characteristic of Sichuan, having been excavated in the late Sui and early Tang

dynasties, especially in the Tang dynasty, so that the Rex statues of the period are a combination of many styles and reflect the cultural intermingling of the time.

Bazhong, known as Bazhou in ancient times, was a necessary route to Sichuan, which was exceptionally dangerous and a place of military use, and then changed its affiliation with the dynasties until the beginning of the Republic of China in the second year due to its unique geographical location. According to historical records [1], the northern part of Sichuan had more frequent cultural exchanges with the northern Central Plains during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, and the unique Jinniu Road in Bazhong became the main hub of traffic between the Central Plains and the southwest region, and in the military development afterwards, the ancient road of Micang gradually became another important road into Shu besides the Jinniu Road, so the military messages from Chang'an City were transmitted from the Jinniu Road into Shu, and then from the Micang Road to the area of Bazhong, and this path The speed of information transmission was faster than that of reaching the provincial capital, and after the Sui Dynasty ended the division between the Northern and Southern Dynasties and unified China, the national and financial power was stronger than ever, and at the same time religious beliefs were strongly supported by the ruler, Emperor Wen of Sui, so Buddhist culture ushered in its golden period. In addition, Yang Xiu, the king of Sichuan at that time for 20 years and vigorously promote Buddhism, under the influence of this unique factors, the northern Sichuan cave temples in the Central Plains under the influence of Buddhist factors, ushered in the early stages of the construction of the grottoes.

Because the "Rex" image was introduced to the West from India, the early Chinese cave paintings inherited the artistic style of the original statues intact until later, when the "Rex" image was gradually regionalized and then transferred to Dunhuang. Experts and scholars generally agree that at the beginning of the Sui dynasty, the cave temples in northern Sichuan were mainly concentrated in Guangyuan and Bazhong, and that their main features were inextricably linked to the culture of the two capital cities, and even to Dunhuang. As it spread through different regions, the image of Rex also underwent significant changes in number, form, and shape. As early as the Northern Wei period, Rex statues can be roughly divided into bodhisattva-type Rex and warrior-type Rex, 492 surviving caves in Dunhuang from which it can be seen that the image of Rex has been Centralized, and with a strong man-made concept of thought, while the two capital regions of the Central Plains, represented by the Longmen Grottoes, after the south into Shu, directly absorbed by Bazhong, Guangyuan and other places, so the early Bazhong Grotto Temple The form and style of statues were mostly oriented toward the Central Plains until the middle and late Sui dynasty when they gradually developed into their own unique artistic characteristics.

1.1. Artistic features of Vajrapani in the Sui Dynasty

According to the document "General Record of the Contents of the Grottoes in Bazhong", there are 122 nooks in the Bazhong Grottoes where the statues of Vajrapani are distributed, respectively in the South, West, and North niches, Shuining Temple, and Shimen Temple, etc [11]. Most of the statues in other areas have been weathered or painted over by the monks and lay people over time, resulting in damage to their original appearance. The cave statues of the period were in various combinations, often showing a Buddha and a Bodhisattva and two Rhesus or a Buddha and a Bodhisattva and a Rhesus, and the decoration of their niches was more extravagant than that of the Guangyuan Grottoes, with a large number of ornate and

elaborately decorated tent-shaped niches, the origin of which can be traced back to Dunhuang and the Guanzhong region, as Wang Minqing points out: “Although not unique to the Northern Zhou, the tent-shaped niches are but is a representative niche of the Northern Zhou niche, just as the single-layered mantle tower is a representative of the Northern Qi niche.”⁴¹ Cave niche modeling changes directly affect the arrangement of the Rex statue, such as the statue of Guangyuan Rex statue is mostly distributed in the niche of the outer side, mostly influenced by the layout of the arched niche outside square inside round, while the Bazhong Rex statue is mostly distributed in the niche of the inner side of the outer position, which also has a certain relationship with the changes in niche modeling.

According to the author’s review of data and comparative study of its collated photographic material, the Bazhong Grottoes found that the statue of Rex was later than the Longmen Grottoes and Dunhuang Grottoes of the Northern Wei period, the Longmen Grottoes of the Northern Wei period, the statue of Rex is naked, tall and majestic, with a crown on his head, standing barefoot on a lotus seat, with a backlight on the back of his head, holding a vajra pestle in his left hand at his waist, his right hand raised in front of his chest with his five fingers spread out in a palm shape, crossed by a scarf In front of the knees, feet open, under the long skirt, waist belt, long skirt hem trailing the ground, facing the entrance to the cave, while looking up to listen to the Buddha, the left arm curved back to raise the palm, the right arm down half clenched fist, the left leg straight, the right leg bow, as a guard. In the Dunhuang caves of the same period, the original two types of rhesus statues gradually evolved into an imaginary bodhisattva-type rhesus wearing only an x-shaped celestial garment. So far, there is no clear indication of the artistic style of the rhesus statue in the Ha-Bazhong Grottoes of the same period, but it is known from the gilt-bronze statue of the rhesus in the Xi’an Museum collection from the Sui dynasty that the rhesus statue has a solemn facial expression, a strong and powerful body, a collar on the upper body, a pendant necklace, and a long skirt that intersects the abdomen to wear the jade, and a long skirt that hangs down to the ankles, which is tentatively judged to be a bodhisattva-suited rhesus figure. Through the comparison of the artistic form of different periods of Rex statue can be seen, they are different is that the Sui dynasty Rex statue of the silk belt more show a ring around the belly, while the Northern dynasty period is presented X-shaped. The features are very similar to those of the 21 niche Rexes in Ba Zhong, who are dressed as bodhisattvas and have long skirts that hang down to their ankles. The hooked skirt and the cloud-like skirt pattern of the second statue retain many of the features of the bodhisattva-clad Rex statue from the Northern Wei period. [5]



*Bassi Niche
Grotto.*



*Interior view of the
Weiping.*



*Dunhuang 194 Cave
Rex.*



*Longmen Cave
Rex.*

Figure 1. Cave at Thousand Buddha Cliff.

Throughout the early Sui dynasty, the Rex statue is a comprehensive art of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Buddhism, Buddhism and Buddhism. For example, in the 105 South Niche, Shuining Temple 1, 2 and 8, the Buddha's face is slightly oval, the eyes are thin and long, the nose and lips are small and coquettish, and the face is more benevolent and feminine, just like a young girl on earth, which is a true reflection of the change in the Buddha's image.

1.2. Succession and development of "Vajra Rex" in the Tang Dynasty

The period was a period of development for the Rex statues in northern Sichuan, and the influence of the Jinniu Road, a major transportation route, led to a mutual influence between the Rex statues of Sichuan and the two Beijing areas [10]. First, there is an increase in the number of cave forms and combinations, with a rich variety of niche styles, such as nine bodies in one pavement and ten bodies in one pavement, e.g., the 116 niche Western Pure Land Variation (early Tang Dynasty) in the south niche of Bazhong, "a three-tiered niche with a square outer niche and a two-tiered Buddhist tent niche in the middle tier, 350 cm high, 80 cm wide, and 70 cm deep". The upper and lower eaves are decorated with mountain flower and banana leaf motifs, and the square niche lintel is carved with a six-pronged geometric pattern, with a hanging tent and decorated with bead chains; secondly, although the lower body of the Rex is mainly clothed in a war dress, compared with the first period, there is a short sheep field skirt, which is the most realistic depiction of the dress of the laborers in the northern Sichuan area. Simple, the basic features of fierce eyes, serious expression, neck collar without necklace, out of the cross posture is more obvious, the cape than the first phase of the floating changes, more reflect the vivid realism of the sculpture.

During the Tang Dynasty, the Longmen Grottoes reached its peak, and the Bazhong Grottoes were comparable at this time, as the weathering of the Bazhong Grottoes was more serious, so I used the historical statues of the Longmen Grottoes from the same period for image analysis, for example: the Extreme South Cave, the body of the Rex twists naturally, the upper body is sinewy, muscle lines are clearly visible, the abdomen bulges, the right hand drops, the left hand is strongly raised to spread the palm in front of the chest, especially the abdomen is very realistic, and is known as the plum blossom belly. The lower body of the Bazhong Grottoes Rex statue of this period is a short skirt with a waist of the skirt turned out and barefooted. The comparison shows that the style and physique of the Rex statues from different regions of the same period are very similar, which also reflects the cultural prosperity of the Tang Dynasty, which brought about the exchange and integration of art and culture. [4]



Figure 2. Tianwang on the left side of Cave 22, Guangyuan Thousand Buddha Cliff, Tianwang on the right side of Niche 2, Shuining Temple, Bazhong, Sheng Tang, Second Tianwang in Niche 4, Shuining Temple, Bazhong, Sheng Tang.

In the late Tang period, the influence of the An-Shi Rebellion brought the statue of Rex in the Bazhong Grottoes into a period of stagnation and ossification, with the use of silk bands in the statue of Rex being merely for decoration, not much use, and not reflecting the mystery and power of Rex at all, with straw footwear, knee pads, short sheep field skirts, and the disappearance of the pestle. The secularization of Rishi is more serious, and the type of Rishi with a crown on his head is almost invisible[9]. The decline of the statue of Rex is also related to the decline of the comprehensive power of the Tang Dynasty, as well as the emergence of a separate statue of the King of Vishalman in the Bazhong region.



Figure 3. *Dong Qin statue partial - Rex statue.*



Figure 4. *Bazhong Nandian No. 116 Right Tenno Shengtang.*

To sum up, the Vajra statues in the Bazhong Grottoes gradually changed from the initial image of the Central Plains to a unique local style of artistic statue as the Tang Dynasty flourished and declined, and the artistic expressions of different periods were reflected in the statues until the late Tang Dynasty, when the working people of the land of Bazhong outlined their unique characteristics in the shape of the image of Rex, a spiritual repository and an artistic existence. The inevitable way.

2. The Innovative Study of the “Vajrapani” in the Grottoes of Bazhong

The Grottoes of Bazhong reflect not only the diversity of traditional Chinese culture, but also the wisdom of the ancients as a thousand-year-old art and culture with local characteristics, which is the treasure of practice and the source of our ability to promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Theoretical basis.

2.1. Extraction of dance form elements from the Rex statue

The intuitive shape of the Rex statue provides us with elements for dance creation, but since the physical shape of the Rex statue in the Bazhong Grottoes varies from period to period, we should make a formal classification of the dance images we see, and let each movement be attributed to the corresponding dance site, and then use the collected dance elements to organize and extract the movements, thus providing a reference for the practicality of the Rex statue. The basis for the practicality of the statue of Rishi is the following

2.2. Selection of costumes in the statue of Rishi

As the side language of dance, the costume plays an important role in the transmission of the dance content. The selection of dance costumes should be based on the cultural connotation of the times, but also on the needs of specific dance

costumes for “specific analysis”, and the innovation should be based on historical facts, and the basic principle of not destroying the cultural connotation. Therefore, the costume of the Rex statue, which plays an important role in the dance, must be chosen in accordance with the images and historical records, and in the process of reproducing the dance costume, the creation of the costume must be based on “in line with the cultural and historical facts and easy to dance”, and the basic characteristics of the costume must not be changed because of innovation. Since the selection of costumes involves many elements from different periods, it is inevitable to classify and categorize the costumes, so it is better to list the costumes and make a unification of common points and classification of different points. In order to better highlight the uniqueness and uniqueness of dance costumes, the most direct way is to restore the records in the materials, and to see the essence through the phenomenon, and this way is also more in line with the aesthetic needs of ancient people.

2.3. Grasping the charm of dance

The application of dance charm in the Bazhong Grottoes statue is the soul of the dance, and allows the audience to feel the visual impact of the culture from the eyes and facial expressions of the performers. For example, the shocking Dunhuang dance - “Silk Road Flower Rain”, it is through the reproduction of the cave murals to let the thousands of years of Chinese art and culture to reappear, but also let the audience through the most intuitive visual effect to feel the charm of Dunhuang dance, it is the fresco shape as the action elements, to the physical appearance of the action pulse to create a rich The classic “rebounding pipa” is a legend that audiences have praised. The rhythm of the dance changes from slow to rapid, and the range of movement from small to large, showing the emotional ups and downs of the characters to the fullest; presenting a perfect dance image. In this environment, the audience enjoys the beauty of the dance.

3. Conclusions

The cave statue art is the embodiment of the wisdom of the ancients, and also fully expresses the embodiment of the soul's living in peace. The Bashu cave group is more like an artistic symbol of the symbols of the times, which fully shows the Bashu people's desire for life in a unique and subtle way, and successfully uses a variety of modeling techniques such as exaggeration, realism and symbolism to show the ancient style of art and culture of the land of Bashu, which provides a solid theoretical foundation for us to understand the ancient It has laid a solid theoretical foundation and an intuitive pictorial basis for our understanding of ancient history a thousand years later.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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