

Background Study of Chinese Buddhist Grotto Statue Art using SLR

Li Xiaoshu¹, Mohd Johari Mohd Yusof^{1*}, Ser Wue Hiong², Velu Perumal³,
Wang Xiufeng⁴
{lixiaoshu8706@126.com¹, m_johari@upm.edu.my², wuehiong@upm.edu.my³}

Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia¹

Abstract: While Buddhism had originated in India, Buddhist grotto sculptures had begun in the Maurya Dynasty in India, where the appearance of the images of Buddhas was an important stage and feature of the development of Buddhist grottoes art. As a product of Buddhist art, Buddhist grotto sculpture art was introduced to China and had merged with Chinese culture. After continuous development and innovation, it finally formed a Buddhist art form with Chinese characteristics; from the perspective of carving art, the history of Buddhist grottoes statues is a history of art development and art evolution of statues. Accordingly, this paper first analyses the origin of Buddhism, and uses the SLR method in order to introduce the social background of the introduction of Buddhist grottoes statues into China, the rise of the Chinese Grottoes statues, and the basic shape and construction of Chinese Grottoes. Finally, it summarises the artistic values of Chinese Buddhist cave statues for future research. Buddhist grottoes statues in China is a product of religion, in the sense of contemporary civilisation, and while the advancement of civilisation can be rid of the early religious beliefs and ideas, it cannot be freed of the human inner desire for beauty and spiritual pursuit. Notably, Buddhist grotto sculpture art, with its static human body's grand outline, expresses highly generalised and admirable objects and ideals. This is the exact reason why religion is decreasing and dissimilating gradually, but the art that is related to it is increasingly more needed and more in demand by people.

Key words: Buddhism; Social Background; Art of statues

1 Introduction

Buddhism is a religion of ancient India. It appeared in the 6th to 7th centuries BC, and was founded by Gautama Siddhartha (562-480 BC), who was honored as Shakyamuni [1] (Kuang Min, 2011). When Shakyamuni was alive, he had strongly opposed the cult of personality and did not advocate the painting of Buddha statues. Therefore, the original Buddhism had not allowed the creation of idols.

The believers' praise of the Buddha could only be symbolised by things that were related to the Buddha, rather than by the image of Shakyamuni Buddha [1] (Kuang Min, 2011). For example, the *Ficus religiosa* L. was used to symbolise that Shakyamuni had once become enlightened and became a Buddha under the tree. Here, the *Ficus religiosa* L. represented Shakyamuni. Similarly, the footprints of the Buddha were used to express the arrival and existence of Shakyamuni, and some parts of the Buddha's body were used to replace the whole body. In addition, a white elephant coming down from heaven meant 'reincarnation', a lotus

flower meant the 'Buddha's birth', and a horse meant 'becoming a monk'. These images of horses, elephants, lions, lotus flowers and bodhi trees, which respectively implied the Buddha's 'birth', 'becoming a monk', 'becoming a Taoist' were important historical and aesthetic phenomena of Buddhist grotto art.

King Ashoka, the ruler of the Maurya Dynasty (reigned around 272-231 BC), had strongly advocated Buddhism [1] (Kuang Min, 2011). After Buddhism became the state religion of India, Buddhist monks, under the guidance of 'vipassana', carved a series of images of Buddhists as had never been done before in the grottoes, which were the places for monks. This was the time when Buddhist grotto statues really started.

The appearance of images of Buddhas was an important stage and feature of the development of Buddhist grottoes art, which was the necessity of historical development and also the result of innovation. With the prevalence of Buddhism in India, its doctrines had spread to central and Western Asia. As a product of Buddhist art, the art of Buddhist grottoes had also been introduced into China and had been integrated with Chinese culture, forming its unique artistic style and showing its unique artistic charm, which was known and admired by the world.

The excavation of Chinese Grottoes began in the 3rd century, prevailed in the 5th-8th century, and ended in the 16th century [1] (Kuang Min, 2011). The art of Buddhist grottoes statues was introduced into Xinjiang in China from the Han and Wei Dynasties to the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, experiencing more than a thousand years of development, where China was the most developed country in the world with regard to Buddhist grottoes statues. These grottoes are mainly distributed in the northwest, Central Plains, southeast and southwest of China, which is related to the route of Buddhism spreading into China.

"Art started from sculpture" [2] (Chen Shaofeng, 1995), and the art of Buddhist grottoes statues is a product of history as well as an artwork that has been created by unknown or famous craftsmen in the past dynasties according to the Buddhist classics. From the perspective of carving art, the history of Buddhist grottoes statues is a history of art development and the art evolution of statues.

According to Marxism, the evolution and development of artistic creation are ultimately determined by the social and economic basis, but there is an imbalance between the prosperity and decline of artistic creation and the development of social economy as well as the rise and fall of the times [3] (Marx & Engels, 1972). As 'imported products', although the construction of the Buddhist grottoes statues was confined by the kalpa su[^]tra of Buddhist (there were strict rules of building Buddhist statues, the so-called 'kalpa su[^]tra'. In order to obtain a unified standard image of Buddha, the ancients measured the index of various parts of the Buddha statue with their fingers which was described in the Buddhist sutras, on the construction of a Buddha statue), these statues were more influenced by the aesthetic taste of the times. The artists of different times have constantly enriched and improved it, showing a transformation process of absorption and reference. After the northern and Southern Dynasties, Buddhist grottoes statues gradually formed a style and modelling system that were suitable for Chinese aesthetic taste. At the same time, with the development of the times and social changes, different aesthetic standards and the emergence of an ideal of beauty, grotto statues gradually began to express the personality and mood of the people in real life.

As Engels has said, "History often goes forward by leaps and turns. If we have to follow it everywhere, we will not only pay attention to many irrelevant materials, but also the ideological process will be interrupted... Therefore, the logical research method is the only applicable way. However, in fact, this method is nothing more than a way of historical research, and it only gets rid of the historical form"[3] (Marx & Engels, 1972). Therefore, in the study of the artistic

characteristics of Chinese Buddhist grottoes statues, this article analyses according to the main context of the times.

2 Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Method

Task	Methods	Instruments	Output
To understand the background of Chinese Buddhist Grotto Statue Art	Systematic literature review (SLR)	Journals and Books	Research results of Chinese grottoes at home and abroad

The SLR method has been used to understand the historical background of Chinese Buddhist Grotto Statue Art. SLR is a comprehensive research method with the function of knowledge innovation. It is based on specific research purposes, precise research questions, and accords to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, many individual documents are screened out of relevant documents. Under the control of some methods, the researchers use standardised techniques to extract data from selected documents; integration is to obtain a complete set of research methods for new problems and new theories.

China has long been studying Buddhism and grottoes: Tang Yongtong was a Chinese educator, philosopher and scholar who was best known for studying Chinese Buddhism; Professor Jing Sanlin, the founder of the history of Chinese production tools, is a famous archaeologist, museologist, historian, and production tool historian; Yan Wenru, is a famous archaeologist; Ding Mingyi is a researcher and master tutor at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and is engaged in Buddhist art and archaeological research; Liu Daoguang is a professor and doctoral supervisor at the School of Art, Southeast University.

In addition, there are more in-depth studies on Chinese grotto art abroad. Ono Genmyō was a Japanese scholar of Buddhism and Buddhist art. A native of Kanagawa Prefecture, Ono's large body of work includes the seminal "The Artworks and History of Buddhism". Shinkai Taketaro is a Japanese sculptor. Tadashi Sekino is good at using archaeological methods to conduct detailed textual research on architecture and art, and is good at microscopic research. Daijō Tokiwa, is a scholar of Chinese Buddhism, and a Japanese ancient architect. Osvald Sirén was a Finnish-born Swedish art historian, whose interests had included the art of 18th century Sweden, Renaissance Italy and China. Seiichi Mizuno is an archaeologist and is also a researcher at the Kyoto Research Institute of the Institute of Oriental Culture, who later become a professor of humanities at Kyoto University College. Toshio Nagahiro is a Japanese art historian, who is good at the history of Oriental Art.

These scholars have made great achievements in the study of grottoes and the Buddhist culture in China. Many of their theories have brought a lot of help to later researchers, and many of their achievements are based on the research of these scholars. The best way to understand history is to trace back to the source and find the source of the theory for analysis, so that the research direction can be clearer. Therefore, the articles and books to be analysed in this paper are from these scholars.

Through three retrieval systems, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Data and 'Connected Papers', the above-mentioned scholars had entered keywords, and the retrieved articles were based on the key words 'Buddhism' at that time, which narrowed the scope of 'Grottoes Art', and obtained the following results.

In the book "The History of Buddhism in the Han, Wei, Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties" [4] (Tang Yongtong, 1938), the Buddhist history expert Tang Yongtong elaborated on the excavation of grottoes and the people's emphasis on meditation, an important feature of the Northern Wei Buddhist belief, which became a breakthrough in the study of early Chinese grottoes.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, there have been many research results. "The History of Chinese Grotto Sculpture Art" [5] (Jin Sanlin, 1988) and the "General Theory of Chinese Grotto Art" [6] (Yan Wenru, 2003) were in-depth research on the content of grottoes and the subject matter of sculptures. Regarding the staging of the Longmen Caves in the Tang Dynasty, "Stages and Types of Statues in Longmen Grottoes of Tang Dynasty" [7] (Ding Mingyi, 1979) and "Complete Collection of Chinese Cave Sculptures" [8] (Liu Changjiu, 2000) compared and ranked the archaeological types of the statues of Tang Dynasty in Longmen and had divided the Tang Dynasty statues into three Periods: Gaozong period, Wu Zetian period, and Xuanzong period, providing chronological basis for further thematic and comprehensive research. From the literature review of grotto statues, the article "Investigation and Stages of Sichuan Cliff Carvings" [9] (Hu Wenhe, 1991) provided a comprehensive introduction to the caves and stone sculptures in Sichuan.

About the Tianlongshan Grottoes in Taiyuan, Shanxi, the Institute of Ancient Building Protection of Shanxi Province did not publish the Investigation Report on Tianlongshan Grottoes [10] (Li Yuqun, 1991) until 1991. At the same time, in 1991, the Cultural Relics Press published the Chinese version of "China Grottoes·Yungang Grottoes 1" and "China Grottoes·Longmen Grottoes 1", which promoted the research of Chinese caves. In the book "History of Ancient Chinese Art Thoughts" [11] (Liu Daoguang, 1988), a rather in-depth introduction and analysis were carried out on the introduction of Buddhist sculpture art to China and its development with Chinese characteristics, as well as the modelling of Buddhist sculptures, decorations and even the colour carvings and murals in grotto art, which systematically showed the whole picture of the Chinese Buddhist sculpture art.

The international research on Chinese Grottoes has also achieved a lot. Major works include Ono Genmyō's (Japanese scholar of Buddhism and Buddhist art) "Overview of the developed system of Buddhist" (1938) [12], Taketarō Shinkais (Japanese sculptor) "Rock-carvings from the Yun-kang Caves" (1921) [13], and so on. "Buddhist Monuments in China" (1925) [14] was published by Tadashi Sekino (Japanese architectural historian, art historian and archaeologist), and Daijō Tokiwa (Scholar of Chinese Buddhism, Japanese ancient architect). The contents and photos that have been introduced in the book are earlier than Édouard Chavannes' books. Osvald Sirén's (Pioneer of the 20th Century Studies of European and American Chinese Art History) "Chinese Sculpture-From the Fifth Century to the Fourteenth Century" (1925) is a large-scale atlas for Western scholars to study Chinese sculptures [15]. In 1951, "The Yungang Grottoes: An Archaeological Investigation Report on Buddhist Cave Temples in Northern China in the Fifth Century AD" by Seiichi Mizuno (archaeologist) and Toshio Nagahiro (Japanese archaeologist, literary and art history expert) was published successively, which marked the highest level of Japanese research on Yungang Grottoes at that time [16]. The entire book contains 16 Volumes, each volume is divided into 2 volumes, and there are two papers and nearly 100 photos. The book can be divided into four parts. The first part is a record of the main cave, which records the shape of the cave, the subject of the statue, the content of the statue and the current situation. The second part is a research paper, which mainly includes: "Yungang Grottoes Genealogy", "From Yungang Style to Longmen Style", "Western Styles in Yungang Grottoes Sculptures", "The Sequence of Yungang Grottoes", and "Chinese Cave Temples", "Tanyao and Yungang Grottoes", "Yungang Stone Buddha Temple", "The Historical

Background of Yungang Grottoes", "The Decorative Significance of Yungang Grottoes", "The life Story of Buddha in Yungang Grottoes", "Iconology of Yungang". The third part is the pictures, including the actual cave maps, rubbings, and a large number of photos of caves. The fourth part is an appendix. Significantly, this work is abundant and complete in information, and it still has a far-reaching impact until this day.

3 Discussions

Chinese Buddhist grottoes statue art has an important position and unique artistic appearance in the history of Chinese sculpture. It is an interdisciplinary subject, which is interrelated with multiple subjects, and it occupies an important position in the history of Chinese art, art and sculpture. The "General Theory of Chinese Grotto Art" [6] (Yan Wenru, 2003) and "History of Chinese Art" [17] (Peng Desuo, 2004) had both elaborated on the concept of grotto art and Buddhist statues, but did not clearly explain the concept of Buddhist Grotto Statues Art. Although many works had special chapters on Chinese Buddhist statues or grotto art, they had mentioned Buddhist Grotto Statues Art based on the research of the entire Chinese sculpture history, art history, grotto history, Buddhist history and other art disciplines. However, there is no systematic and comprehensive exploration of Chinese Buddhist sculpture art based on grottoes.

3.1 The social background of the introduction of Buddhist grottoes statues into China

Buddhist art is the most widely spread religious art in the East in the Middle Ages [18] (Ding Mingyi, Chen Bing, & Xing Jun, 1992). When studying the art of Chinese Buddhist grottoes sculptures, the first thing that needs to be analysed is the reason Buddhism is widely believed in China, leading to the creation of grotto art.

Buddhism, like other religions, is a supernatural, absurd, illusory, and distorted reflection of natural and social forces in people's consciousness. "In this reflection, people had taken the form of superhuman power. At the beginning of history, the power of nature was reflected first. In the later evolution, there were various complicated personifications of natural forces among people from various countries. In addition to the power of nature, there was a force that made people suffer from disasters and suffering, which was far more powerful than the power of nature" [6] (Yan Wenru, 2003). "For those who have been industrious and poor all their lives, religion teaches them to be docile and patient, and comforts them with the hope of winning God's favour. For those who live solely on the labor of others, religion teaches them to be charitable and generous, and defends their exploiter's lives, allowing them to have a chance to go to the paradise at a low price" [19] (Li Zehou, 1989).

The caste system in ancient India divided the Indians into different hierarchical categories, which intensified the social contradictions at that time and had seriously affected the social development of India. In order to stabilise the foundation of society, Buddhism, which advocated the equality of all living beings, was created. It reflected the intention of the Indian second caste, Kshatriya, and the wealthy third caste, Vaisya and carried out anti caste movement in a religious struggle. Buddhism advocated equality of all caste under the banner of religion and showed gentleness, obedience and tolerance to the oppressors. People were advised to give up all desire to ease class struggle. Mahayana Buddhism required all living beings to refrain from any resistance to the rebellion, and to give up the struggle, which was an attempt to

suppress people's hatred to the exploiters, i.e., the hatred to the hierarchy. These doctrines were completely in line with the exploitation purpose of the two classes, namely, the second caste- Kshatriya, and the wealthy third caste- Vaisya, who made the exploited class believe that as long as they believe in Buddha or die in the paradise, they can get the illusory comfort of a better life.

In China, since the end of the Han Dynasty, the aristocratic families have occupied an absolute dominant position, and the ruling class could no longer deceive the people with the words "sons of heaven" and "omen of good fortune". In the miserable situation, people could see no way out. So, they expected the help of supernatural power. It so happened that Buddhism advocated the alleviating of class contradictions and non-fighting, thus the Mahayana Buddhism declaration on saving sentient beings as well as the world catered to the psychology of the people at that time. In such a situation of fierce class contradictions, the working class, in the face of humiliation, turned their hopes to the unknown heaven, hoped to be reborn in Tuṣita, so that there would be Maitreya Bodhisattva, a pure land of bliss and Amitabha. "Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties were the first great split period of China's feudal society. Gone were the days of prosperity and glory, self-esteem and self-pride. In the late Western Jin Dynasty, especially after entering the period of the Sixteen States in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, due to continuous wars and disasters, people's lives were in dire straits, and their lives were threatened. The turbulence and perplexity were the real description of the society at that time. Thereupon, a mood of deep pessimism prevailed. The orthodox Confucianism was neglected because it could not solve the social problems, so people sought spiritual liberation "[2] (Chen Shaofeng, 1995). This practical religious view of the Chinese people and the need of the society not only enabled the ruling class to take Buddhism as a new ruling tool, but it had also greatly fulfilled their spiritual world and helped them to overcome spiritual emptiness in the barbaric wars. As a result, Buddhism had the social foundation for its growth and prosperity, and quickly spread to all social strata. From then on, Buddhism had stepped on the stage of Chinese history.

In ancient China, the excavation of grottoes and the drawing of Buddha statues were regarded as merits and blessings for fulfilling prayers, and they were also called 'Futian', which was a kind behaviour that could transcend the three realms. Therefore, the building of caves had become a common practice from generation to generation, and the Buddhist belief had become a part of secular life. The art of Buddhism is to make the believers concretise abstract doctrines. As artistic aesthetics cannot be separated from physical objects and their abstract notions, art should transform religious concepts into images and religious fears into sublimity and beauty, in which faith plays a significant role. The embodiment of this belief led to the introduction and development of Chinese Buddhist grottoes statues art. The Northern Wei Dynasty was the heyday of Chinese Buddhism, and the art of Buddhist statues also flourished. Excavating grottoes prevailed and there were numerous caves and niches with different sizes.

Buddhism in the north placed an emphasis on *sādhana*, correspondingly so many grottoes and sculptures were built on the mountain. In the south, more Buddha sculptures were carved due to the emphasis on Buddhism principles [20] (Zhang Daaosen, Peng Ya, 2005). Chinese Buddhist grotto sculpture art embodied the Sinicization process of a Buddha statue from 'Sanskrit' to 'Han', and the aesthetic characteristics also showed a trend of transformation, from Indian decorativeness to Chinese freehand brushwork.

3.2 The rise of Chinese Grottoes statues

There are many reasons for the large-scale rise of Buddhist grottoes statues.

First of all, it had something to do with the emperor's meditation and Buddha worship.

In those days, the Chinese people were quite unfamiliar with Buddhism from Tianzhu (ancient India). People regarded Buddhism as the ancient Chinese immortals and worshipped them in that way [21] (Shi Ji,2008).

The rulers not only believed in Buddhism and excavated grottoes, but also gave Buddhist monks and monasteries various privileges to encourage the development of Buddhism. In politics, Buddhism had its own 'law'. These laws, were made according to doctrines, and were not bound by secular laws.

In addition, the rise of grottoes statues was closely related to the active involvement of scholar bureaucrats. The contribution of scholar bureaucrats to Buddhism and grotto statues could be seen in two aspects: one was to advocate theoretically, and the second was to draw Buddha and to engrave buddha statues in person.

Furthermore, the rise of Grottoes was associated with the efforts of ordinary folks.

The common people were not as powerful as the princes and aristocrats who could raise money for the building of grotto statues, neither were they as innovative as the princes and aristocrats who could create grotto statues that were distinguishable from previous grottoes statues nor as well pioneered in style, but they were the most loyal believers of Buddhism who directly created Buddhist statues and accounted for the large population of Buddhists [4] (Tang Yongtong,1983). Although their inscriptions were rarely left in the statue niches, their imprints were left in each niche and each cave, which were the crystallisation of their hard work.

Since the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the art of Buddhist statues that had been introduced into China had been jointly advocated and promoted by the upper-class nobles, middle-class scholar-official intellectuals, and the lower-class civilians, and had developed significantly.

3.3 Basic shape and construction of Chinese Grottoes

After a long period of development, the main types of Chinese grottoes are temple grottoes, monk room grottoes, grottoes with the shape of an inverted ladler, buddha-hall grottoes and grottoes with huge statues.

The first type is the temple grottoes (as shown in Figure 1), where the central tower is erected in the center, so it is also called the central stupa-pillar grottoes (or chaitya). Buddhist relics were collected in the tower. Most of the temple grottoes imitated the central stupa-pillar Buddhist temple. The plane is long and divided into two parts. The top of the front part is shaped like a cylinder arch, the rear part is shaped in a semicircle, and the center of the circle was chaitya carved with stone where believers wandered. That is, a square tower column was built at the back of the grotto, around which niches and statues were made, and the front part of the niches was shaped like a herringbone. The monks worshipped around the tower, which was also called the dextral worship because the monks' worships commenced from the right side of the grottoes.

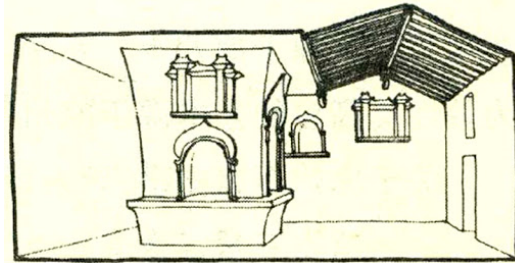


Figure.1. Temple Grottoes

The second type is Vihara (also known as the "monk house for mediation and practice", Vihara) (as shown in Figure 2). It was used for the monks' practice and living. There is a kind of a small cave in the monk's room grottoes, which is dedicated to the practice of Zen, which is called Zen cave or Luohan cave. Zen grottoes is the earliest forms of grottoes. For example, Loma shalixi Grottoes in balabar Grottoes was a small cave with a height of only 4 meters, which was built for one person to practice Buddhism. In China, these caves are smaller with the length and width of the caves of about 1 meter, and the height more than 1 meter. Some of them have no statues or wall decoration.



Figure.2. Vihara

The third type is grottoes with the shape of an inverted ladler (as shown in Figure 3). It imitated the style of a house in a Buddhist temple. The top of the cave has the shape of an

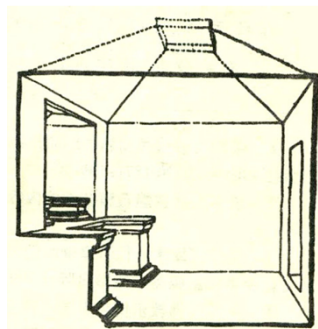


Figure.3. Grottoes with the shape of inverted ladler

inverted ladler that imitates the bed curtains that are used in the dignified places in ancient times. The grottoes are square, with niches on the west or north and south walls. The shape of the niches varied with the development through time. The niche is the representation of the main hall or the affiliate halls. The grottoes with the shape of an inverted ladler were pioneered in China.

The fourth type is known as the buddha-hall grottoes (as shown in Figure 4), which is also a place for the monks to worship Buddha. It is the grotto temple with the most obvious Chinese style. Generally, the image of the Buddha was carved in the cave (such as Binyang middle cave in Longmen) or a niche was carved on the wall of the cave with statues (such as cave 432 of Dunhuang) inside. There was space in front of the Buddha statue. In the prosperous Tang Dynasty, it evolved into Buddhist altar caves, i.e., the top of the cave was in the shape of an inverted ladler, and the walls of the cave were not excavated completely. There was a square room in grottoes with a horseshoe-shaped Buddha altar in the center, and there were statues with seven to nine bodies on the top of the room. Behind the main statue, the back screen went directly to the top of the cave, which made the cave more spatial.



Figure.4. The buddha-hall grottoes

The fifth type is the grottoes with huge statues (as shown in Figure 5), which is the place for the monks to worship Buddha.



Fig.5. The grottoes with huge statues

Most of China's Buddhist grottoes were built on the Silk Road and its two sides. Along this route, the three most famous Grottoes in China had been born, where the small and medium-sized Grottoes that had been created around them provided as foils for them, forming several networks of grottoes.

4 Findings

Due to the rise of Buddhism, the grottoes- a kind of man-made cave-like architecture, were different from ordinary buildings and had been marked with a unique cultural stamp, thus, becoming a form of civilisation. If the most primitive caves were purely places for meditation and were the Embodiment of the strength of human nature [3] (Marx & Engels, 1972), and had the poetic brilliance that was created by human culture, then, the grottoes- with the addition of the Buddha and Bodhisattva that were worshiped by the Buddhists as decorations, were crystallisation of the grottoes' development to reflect the world in an artistic way [22] (Yi Cunguo, 2005). The grottoes also had more aesthetic values because of these statues.

The carrier of Buddhist Grotto Statues Art is the grotto temples. The so-called 'Grotto Temples' are Buddhist temples that are built on the cliffs near the rivers for the monks and believers to worship and practice. The 'Grotto Temple Art' which surfaced at the same time was a comprehensive art that integrated the architectural form of grottoes, sculptures and murals. It is also a complete and special cultural form [23] (Chen Huang, 1995). Grotto art is embodied in the shape of the cave, murals, clay sculptures, stone sculptures, cliff statues, and wooden buildings in front of the caves (wooden buildings should not be included in the grotto culture) [24] (Zhao Yide, 1992). There are cave statues both inside and outside of the caves [25] (Hu Tongqing, Hu Chaoyang 2005). The Grotto statues simulate the entire world, and the artistic images in the caves contain the universe, which is full of various forms and changes. The significance of its visual communication is to spread and promote Buddhism, by tapping the imagination of the viewers, inducing people to image the purity of the Buddha's land and the tragedy of hell, so as to make people remember the greatness of sacrifice and the troubles of desire. Consequently, people could be guided to forsake evil and promote virtue and to believe in Buddhism [26] (Tan Dongfeng, 2006).

Buddhist Grotto Statue Art is a comprehensive art that combines Buddhist statue art, cave art, sculpture art, painting, Chinese art, aesthetics, and Buddhism.

The grottoes' form of construction determines that they are not easily damaged or demolished, as such they are the longest-preserved Buddhist culture carriers in ancient ruins. Significantly, grottoes encompass various fields such as architecture, sculptures, statues, murals, carvings, etcetera, having become an important Buddhist artistic expression.

5 Conclusion

Art, as a specific carrier of history and culture, has its own natural process of derivation, development, climax and decline. However, by summarising its laws and the aspect of aesthetic feeling, people could be more enlightened, to go beyond artistic aesthetics. Chinese Buddhist grottoes statues are no exception; it has a long and complicated process- from the strong contrast between paradise and real life to the harmony and even a complete integration between them, and from the acceptance and development of Buddhist art to its gradual extinction. However, the development and change of artistic thoughts and the ideal of beauty are completely reasonable, for in the art of Buddhist grottoes statues, through variation of the times and in society, various aesthetic standards and aesthetic ideals exist.

By studying the background of Chinese Buddhist grotto sculpture art, we can better understand the reasons why Chinese grottoes still occupy a place in the world and provide a theoretical basis for the study of Chinese grottoes.

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