



**RESEARCH AND DESIGN OF THE COSTUMES OF THE  
DUNHUANG FEITIAN MURAL PAINTINGS**

**BY  
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### **Abstract**

This thesis delves into the captivating world of Dunhuang Feitian painting, focusing on the intricate details of costume design. Beginning with an exploration of the cultural origins and historical evolution of Feitian artistic image, the study investigates its roots in Indian Apsara art and its subsequent manifestations across different regions, including Central Asia and neighboring countries.

Through meticulous analysis, the shapes and costumes of Feitian artistic image in Dunhuang murals are scrutinized across various dynasties, from the Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty. The evolution of Feitian's modeling and attire reveals a rich tapestry of cultural exchange and artistic innovation, culminating in the perfect fusion of costume and form in Dunhuang art.

Furthermore, the thesis evaluates the artistic beauty of Dunhuang Feitian murals and their profound influence on modern art. It examines their impact on contemporary art design and explores the application of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in modern clothing design. In the final chapter, the thesis embarks on a journey of design and creation, proposing innovative ideas for integrating Dunhuang Feitian mural art into modern clothing. Through the presentation of design results, it highlights the potential for bridging the past with the present, offering insights into the development prospects of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in modern dress design.

(Total 55 Pages)

**Keywords:** Dunhuang Feitian, Cultural Origins, Historical Evolution, Mural, Costume, Creativity

Student's Signature ..... Thesis Advisor's Signature .....

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the problem

The installations 飛天 (Feitian) refer to flying deities often found in Chinese Buddhist paintings. 飛天 (Feitian) are nameless celestial beings that play supportive and decorative roles in Buddhist artwork. They are seen throwing flowers, dancing, or playing instruments in the sky while surrounding another, more important, deity. Because Feitian's image and expression have a high artistic appeal, it will be passed down from generation to generation and will last forever, gaining people's respect and love. It has even become a symbol of auspiciousness, which has long exceeded the meaning of Buddhism. When people of later generations appreciate the grotto art, they admire the ancients for their rigor in shaping the Buddha statues. At the same time, the images of flying apsaras with various postures are also deeply imprinted in people's minds (Feitian, 2019).

Since Buddhism was introduced to Dunhuang and the Dunhuang Grottoes began to be built, the image of Feitian has become the object of painters' creations. People regard Feitian as the most active spirit in the celestial palace of Buddhism. Buddhist teachings are full of ideas about artistic aesthetics, but Buddhism believes that beauty belongs to the category of sound and color, and the pursuit of beauty is worldly and unreal. Therefore, Buddhist believers regard the beauty of the world as a commandment, so the artistic image of Feitian is not beautiful. But on the other hand, Buddhist art strives to depict a virtual paradise world, and even regards the viewing of Buddha statues as the most basic way of belief. Therefore, the shapes of Buddhism and Buddha statues still embody worldly beauty.

Feitian is an elf in the heavenly palace. The shape of Feitian embodies the most beautiful and kind images in the world, giving people a sense of intimacy and peace.

All in all, Dunhuang Feitian shows healthy, optimistic and cheerful thoughts and interests, which is also the artistic essence of Feitian's artistic image.

On the surface, Feitian seems to be just an artistic image in Buddhism, but it is vividly portrayed by painters in the grottoes, producing colorful artistic effects. It is also widely circulated among the people and has special value of independent existence. Feitian expresses the ancient people's good wishes for free flight, so the artistic image of Feitian is also a manifestation of idealized romantic art. It will be permanently integrated into the profound cultural connotation of China.

Dunhuang Murals, listed as World Cultural Heritages, are painting art works drawn on the inner walls of Dunhuang grottoes, Gansu province, China. Within a total area of over 50000 square meters, Dunhuang Murals involve 522 grottoes from past dynasties, including Mogao Grottoes, West Qianfo Grottoes, and Anxi Yulin Grottoes. Dunhuang Murals mainly portray the images of deities, activities of deities, deity-deity relations, and deity-human relations in Buddhism, conveying spiritual wishes and conciliating hearts. The Dunhuang grotto murals contain massive information of history, cultures and arts, and visually recorded the religious beliefs, social systems and folk-custom events in different eras. The categories of murals include statue images, classic story paintings of Han Nationality, categorized paintings, historical paintings of Buddhism, figure paintings, and graphic decoration paintings. The contents described in the murals include patterns, figures, animals, plants, clothing, traffic vehicles and buildings. These murals integrate massive colors, lines and other elements, which are distributed to create art syntheses. Shapes of the murals are comprised of forms that are created by lines. Color spreading is applied to create a gorgeous color effect and to finally represent the art forms of murals (Hong, 2020).

In recent years, in the international fashion industry, the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals has been used as a carrier to perfectly combine Eastern culture with Western dress design forms, constantly enriching and deepening the concept of modern dress design. The art of Dunhuang Feitian murals requires more in-depth research and development. Because of its broad and profound ideological connotation, unique art form, and high aesthetic value, it will have a broader development prospect and space in dress design.

## 1.2 Research methods

The following research methods are used in this work:

**Historical Analysis:** To study the origin and historical evolution of Feitian's image, the method of historical analysis is applied to reconstruct the context of the time and place in which the murals of Feitian's images were created. This method includes the analysis of sources, literary data, archaeological finds and other historical documents.

**Comparative Research:** A comparative research method is used to analyze Feitian artistic images from different regions and compare their form, costume and symbolism. This involves analyzing the similarities and differences between various artistic representations of Feitian and their contexts.

**Art and Archeology Analysis Methods:** Art and archeology analysis methods are used to gain a deeper understanding of the form, style and technique of the Feitian murals. These methods allow us to study in detail the artistic features and technologies for creating frescoes.

**Methods of analysis of artistic design and symbolism:** Methods of analysis of artistic design and symbolism are used to analyze the form, costume and symbolism of

Feitian's images. This includes analysis of the composition, color, style and symbols used in Feitian's images.

Experimental Methods: The Design and Create section uses experimental methods, such as creating design concepts and translating them into contemporary clothing, to explore the possibilities of translating Feitian imagery into a contemporary context.

These methods together allow for a comprehensive study of Dunhuang Feitian's murals and their influence on contemporary art and costume design.

### **1.3 Purpose and significance of the research**

The purpose of this work is to carry out research and develop a costume design that is inspired by the Feitian murals from Dunhuang. The main emphasis is on understanding and analyzing the artistic characteristics, as well as the symbolic content of these images, with the aim of further introducing these aspects into contemporary artistic fashion design.

The goal is not only to explore the cultural and historical context of the Dunhuang murals, but also to identify ways in which they can be reinterpreted and interpreted in contemporary fashion and clothing design. This work strives to create new concepts and ideas based on Feitian's images that can be applied to modern costume design practice, thereby contributing to the enrichment and development of contemporary artistic design.

The theoretical significance of this work lies in several aspects: The study of Feitian costumes in the Dunhuang murals allows for greater understanding of the cultural and historical aspects of ancient China and its interactions with other regions and cultures.

Analysis of the form, costume and symbolism of Feitian's images contributes to the expansion of knowledge in the field of artistic design, allowing us to identify the features of style and technique used in ancient Chinese art.

The study of the influence of Dunhuang Feitian's frescoes on modern artistic design allows us to identify the mechanisms of transmission and re-interpretation of cultural images in modern art practice.

The results of the work can serve as the basis for further research in the field of ancient Chinese art, as well as inspire artists and designers to create new works based on the images of Feitian.

The practical significance of this work is manifested in several aspects: The research and costume design of Dunhuang Feitian's murals can serve as a source of inspiration for artists, designers and fashion designers. The creation of new projects based on Feitian imagery and symbolism will enrich contemporary art and design practice.

Studying the Dunhuang murals and their influence on modern art can help attract the attention of cultural tourists and researchers to this topic. This could stimulate the development of museum programs, exhibitions, and cultural events related to the study and interpretation of these murals.

The results of the work may be of interest to the fashion and design industry, attracting the attention of designer brands, fashion magazines and media platforms. It is possible to use Feitian's images in clothing collections, photo shoots, fashion shows and advertising campaigns.

#### **1.4 Current status and development trends of research on the artistic image of Dunhuang Feitian**



Dunhuang Art Research Institute has gone through more than 60 years since its establishment in 1944. After the Dunhuang Academy was established in 1984, under the leadership of its first director Duan Wenjie, various Dunhuang art research projects across the academy began to progress.

Duan Wenjie started copying Dunhuang murals in his early years and devoted his life to the study of Dunhuang art. The inheritance and innovation of Dunhuang art are also issues that we must seriously consider in the development of today's art.

Currently, in China, the Dunhuang Costume Culture Research Center jointly established by Donghua University and Gansu Dunhuang Academy is studying the relevant content of clothing in Dunhuang murals. The general topic of the research center is "Dunhuang Studies and the Study of Costumes of Past Dynasties". It is further subdivided into "Research on Ancient Chinese Clothing Expressed in Dunhuang Art", "Research on Dunhuang Studies and Chinese Silk History", "Research on Makeup, Modeling and Artistic Imagery", "Research on Costumes Expressed in Dunhuang Art" and other directions.

In the 1990s, the Dunhuang Academy launched a classification study on the Dunhuang Grottoes. The purpose was to comprehensively and systematically make the culture reflected in the grotto art public to the world, thereby promoting the further development of Dunhuang studies.

The artistic image of Feitian in Dunhuang murals is an artistic work based on the traditional art of the Chinese nation, absorbing the elements of Indian Feitian in the early years, and integrating the culture of the Central Plains and the Western Regions. Due to dynasty changes, social and cultural development, and the blending of Chinese and Western cultures, the shape and style of Feitian are constantly changing due to historical development. Different artists from different eras have left us Feitian art images with different styles

## Chapter 2

### The cultural origins and historical evolution of Feitian's artistic image

#### 2.1 The origin of the artistic image of Feitian

Feitian, literally speaking, refers to the gods flying in the sky. They can soar freely in the sky with graceful postures. Although Feitian is an artistic form in Buddhism, her image comes from ancient Indian mythology. She is a composite of the two gods Gandharva and Kinnara in ancient Indian mythology. Gandharva (Figure 2.1) is a god who does not eat meat and wine, but only seeks aroma as nourishment. He will emit a strong aroma from his body. Kinnara is translated as Tianle God in Sanskrit. The legendary Kinnara has a dignified appearance (Figure 2.2) and a beautiful voice.



Figure 2.1 Gandharva statue

Source: Web image, 2023



Figure 2.2 Kinnara statue

Source: Web image, 2019



Kinnara and Gandharva were inseparable and were a loving couple. They are both the gods of music who serve Emperor Shi and are responsible for playing beautiful music for the gods in the palace.

According to legend, between the 6th and 5th centuries BC, Prince Gautama Siddhartha of Kapilavastu (now Nepal) in ancient India founded Buddhism. Moreover, Siddhartha Gautama's father was from the Sakya clan. After he became enlightened, he was revered as Sakyamuni, which means "the saint of the Sakya clan". Therefore, Buddhism has also absorbed many elements from ancient Indian mythology, and the gods Gandharva and Kinnara in ancient Indian mythology have also been absorbed into the Buddhist system. By the 2nd century AD, their images had been carved by artists on both sides of the Buddha's backlight.

In addition, these two gods in Buddhism are also combined with the gods, dragons, yakshas, asuras, garudas, and mahurakas to form the eight celestial beings that protect the Buddha's teachings, which is a Buddhist term. Because the eight parts of Tianlong are all "non-human", including eight kinds of Shinto monsters. Because the "Heavenly People" and "Dragon People" are the most important, they are called the "Heavenly Dragons and Eight Parts". Many Mahayana Buddhist scriptures describe that when the Buddha preached the Dharma to Bodhisattvas, monks, etc., there were often devas, dragons and eight tribes participating in listening to the Dharma. Just like whenever the Buddha was preaching, there would be two gods, Gandharva and Kinnara, flying in the sky, playing music and scattering flowers.

Although Gandharva and Kinnara are both one of the eight groups of gods and dragons, their functions are still different. Gandharva often flies in the heavenly palace among the flowers, exuding fragrance in the Buddhist world. As the god of music, he plays music, presents flowers and praises to the Buddha. Kinnara, as the god of song, plays music, sings and dances for Buddha, Bodhisattvas and gods in the Buddhist world.

Later, with the development of history, Buddhist theory, the aesthetic and creative needs of art, and the continuous evolution of images, the functions of Gandharva and Kinnara in Buddhism gradually merged into one. Eventually the two images merged into one and evolved into the Feitian we know today.

## **2.2 Feitian artistic images from different regions**

The image of flying gods was born in ancient Hinduism. Long before the emergence of Buddhism, there were many legends about heavenly beings and goddesses in ancient Indian mythology. They later gradually evolved into Buddhism and became Feitian. Buddhism originated in India, reached its peak in the 3rd century BC and began to spread to surrounding areas. It was introduced to China along the Silk Road, and then from China to the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Countless monasteries were built wherever Buddhism went, and many grottoes were built wherever possible. The development of Buddhism is no longer just an encouraged religious activity but is accompanied by a very rich cultural background and cultural connotation. At the same time, in the process of dissemination, a national Buddhist art that integrates local culture and continuously innovates has been formed. Judging from the image of Feitian, Feitian was introduced to the Western Regions of China from India along with Buddhism. After it spread in China, it was gradually introduced to some neighboring countries, such as Japan and South Korea. The different styles of Feitian artistic images presented by Buddhist art in different regions together constitute the infinite richness of Buddhist art. The image of Feitian is constantly changing in different eras and regions. Next, we will divide it into different areas according to the spread of Feitian's image for specific analysis.

### **2.2.1 Indian Apsara Art Image**

The image of Feitian comes from Buddhism, and India is the birthplace of Buddhism. According to records in Buddhist scriptures, Feitian is a kind of flying god in people's imagination. Her image is not very beautiful, she looks human but not

human, with horns on her head. But through the creations of artists, they evolved into messengers of happiness in the Buddhist world. These apsaras do not fly on their wings. The painters depict them with long streamers and soft bodies, which makes people feel that they are already flying in the sky.

During the prosperous period of Hinduism, the expression of Apsara also reached a peak period, and many exquisite works of Apsara appeared successively. In addition to Buddhist art, the image of flying gods is also widely displayed in Hindu and Jain temples or caves. Especially after the 5th century AD, many large-scale temples and grottoes appeared in ancient India, and Hindu art reached its heyday. The artistic sculptures among them reflected the infinite creativity of Indian art.

Kailasa Temple is one of the richest and best-preserved temples in India with religious art works. It is a large-scale temple carved out of a high rock wall and has gone through more than a hundred years of excavation history. This is not so much a building as a magnificent work of sculptural art. The rigorous design, fine carvings and perfect effects of the Kailasa Temple can be said to be unique in the world. Among the many sculptures in the temple, there are many sculptures about the Indian Apsara. Among them, a set of relief works with a very prominent image of the flying sky is divided into two pieces. The two pieces are facing each other in the same form but have slightly different details. One piece is flying to the right (Figure 2.3). The male Apsara in front holds up a fire wheel with one hand, and the other hand is incomplete. One leg is bent in front and the other leg is kicked back, which looks full of strength. At the same time, his head is looking back and looking at the female Apsara behind him. The female Apsara in the back leaned on his shoulder with one arm, and put the other hand in front of her abdomen. She looked at him with her eyes, and the streamers on her body formed a circle behind her. The two flying stars, one strong and the other soft, cling to each other and look out for each other, making the scene quite dynamic. Among them, both male and female Apsaras are very rich in accessories. They wear crowns and garlands on their heads, earrings on their ears, necklaces and collars on their necks, armlets on their arms, and accessories on their

abdomen and waist. They used the distorted movement of the body and the flying ribbons of the woman to create the feeling of flying. The image of the Apsara in this temple is the most exquisite among the Indian Apsara arts, and the accessories on the body are very rich and delicate. The image of flying apsaras in India mainly comes from the art of sculpture.



Figure 2.3 The image of India's flying sky

Source: Web image, 2015

### 2.2.2 Feitian artistic images from Central Asia and the Western Regions

Gandhara refers to the area in northern India, including what is now Afghanistan and the area around Peshawar in northern Pakistan. Gandhara art had a profound influence on early Chinese Buddhist art in the early days when Buddhism was introduced to China. The main content of Gandhara art is the carving of Buddha statues and Buddhist stories. Buddha statues in addition to individual statues, there are also many group statues such as three statues or Dharma pictures.

(Figure 2.5) Above the Buddha, there are two flying boys dragging flower baskets. Their bodies are almost horizontal. The chubby shape of the flying boys

shows the childishness of children. They also have small wings on their backs. They have cute expressions, dexterous movements, and exquisite production, reflecting the exquisite carving skills of the sculptors at that time. The flying images here are all in the form of children with wings, which immediately reminds us of the image of Cupid. They are obviously influenced by ancient Greek and Roman art and reflect the diverse artistic and cultural characteristics of the Gandhara region.

Then go to the ancient Western Regions, which is now China's Xinjiang region, and ancient Qiuci included Kuqa and Baicheng in the current Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. After the 2nd century, it was also the center of Buddhism in the Western Regions. Therefore, the most famous image of Feitian in the Western Regions is the Feitian in the grottoes in Qiuci.

Among them, as the years change, the image of Feitian also changes, from simple and crude to delicate and delicate. The Kizil Grottoes are the largest of the Qiuci Grottoes. There are also many murals with flying images in the Kizil Grottoes. For example, the image of Feitian is relatively clear. There are many images of Feitian on the top of the back room of Cave 48. There are both men and women among these flying gods. Some hold umbrellas to make offerings, some scatter flowers, and some put their hands together in different postures. Kizilxin 1 Cave is a newly discovered cave in the 1970s. Some clay sculptures of the Nirvana Buddha remain in the back room of this cave. On the top of the back room, several huge figures of flying apsaras are completely preserved. Three flying apsaras occupy the top of the back room.





Figure 2.4 The image of Feitian in Gandhara carvings

Source: Web image, 2009

### 2.2.3 Feitian artistic image in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes

When Buddhism gradually spread from west to east along the Silk Road from India through East Asia, Feitian also flew to the east. After the Han Dynasty, with the development of the Silk Road, Dunhuang also became the center of commercial culture. In the long process of evolution and development, the uniqueness formed by changes in its image, style, clothing, shape, etc. occupies a very important position in Dunhuang art. Therefore, the Flying Apsara of Dunhuang is the business card of Mogao Grottoes, a symbol of Dunhuang art, a brilliant stroke of Buddhist art, and a treasure of ancient Chinese art. In the center of Dunhuang City, there is also an iconic work of Feitian, a statue of Feitian playing a pipa.

There are many depictions of Feitian in more than 500 grottoes in the Dunhuang area, and he has almost become an iconic symbol in Dunhuang art. The emergence of the image of Feitian is not only closely related to the cultural background, but also the crystallization of the fusion of multiple cultures of various nationalities at home and abroad. It also reflects the profound and extensive traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

Although Feitian originated from India, Dunhuang Feitian integrates the cultures of the Western Regions, Central Plains, and India, and its expressiveness reflects its uniqueness.

In Dunhuang murals, Feitian is usually located near the top of the cave or above the cave wall, representing the heaven. The Dunhuang Flying Apsara is a familiar artistic image and is also an important part of the murals in the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes. The Flying Apsaras of Dunhuang adds infinite vitality to the monotonous Buddha statues and has its own characteristics in the composition of the picture, including symmetrical composition, continuous composition and fragmented composition.

**Types and Functions of Flying Apsaras in Dunhuang Mural Paintings** There are various types of Flying Apsaras in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes murals, and different types of Flying Apsaras have different shapes and functions. According to the shape, it can be divided into flying boy, half-naked flying and six-armed flying (Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6, Figure 2.7). If classified according to their different responsibilities, they can be divided into Scattering Flower Flying Apsara, Playing Music Flying Apsara and Supporting Apsara Flying Apsara. Different types of flying apsaras also have different functions. According to records in Buddhist scriptures, Feitian has three functions: One is to worship, Feitian is in the form of an offering, with a very devout posture, folding his hands or holding up objects for worship. The second type is the flying flowers. They hold a vase or flower basket in one hand and make the shape of scattered flowers in the other hand. The third type is for dancing and dancing in the sky. They are either playing musical instruments or dancing gracefully.





Figure 2.5 Boy flying into the sky

Source: Web image, 2015



Figure 2.6 Half-naked flying sky

Source: Web image, 2023



Figure 2.7 Flying with six arms

Source: Web image, 2023

The Feitian art in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes involves a variety of painting techniques. The traditional painting techniques of murals and the Tianzhu concave and convex method spread from the Western Regions are the two main sources of expression techniques for Dunhuang Feitian. Compared with the Indian concave and convex method, the traditional Chinese color blending method is simply to apply red

on both sides of the cheeks and blend the eyes, showing a three-dimensional effect and rosy color. The color halo method originated during the Warring States Period and was very mature during the Western Han Dynasty. At the end of the fifth century, the color halo method entered Dunhuang murals, and coexisted with the chiaroscuro method of the Western Regions for nearly a hundred years. It was not until the Sui Dynasty at the end of the sixth century that Chinese and Western styles were integrated. With the help of shading and auxiliary color halo as the main technique, the Chinese expression method finally took shape in the Tang Dynasty. It is precisely because of the mutual influence and penetration of the Western and local styles that this new and unique style was formed. For example (Figure 2.8), the image of Feitian is depicted by combining the concave and convex blooming method with traditional Chinese painting methods. This painting technique makes the Dunhuang Flying Apsara more energetic, light and agile flying in the sky of the Buddhist country, enriches the Chinese painting techniques, and also shows the endlessly changing and colorful art world.



Figure 2.8 The unique image of Feitian

Source: Web image, 2011

#### **2.2.4 Feitian artistic images in Yungang, Longmen and surrounding grottoes**

The Yungang Grottoes are located in today's Datong City, Shanxi Province. There are 53 major existing caves. The five oldest large caves were excavated by Tan Yao, so they are called Tan Yao's Five Grottoes. These five caves are large in scale,

and the main statue in each cave is dozens of meters high. The tallest Buddha statue is actually in Cave 19, with a height of 16.8 meters.

There are also many flying images in these large grottoes, most of which are distributed in the blank spaces around the Buddha statues. Among them, the clearest and relatively intact one is on the inside of the cave door of Cave 9. Such as (Figure 2.9). These flying apsaras have various shapes, adding endless fun. But most of them are very large and a little clumsy. But it also reflects a bold and simple style.



Figure 2.9 The flying image of Yungang Grottoe

Source: Web image, 2019

The Longmen Grottoes were excavated during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Due to the great difference in geographical environment between Longmen area and Yungang area, especially the difference in historical background, two completely different styles were formed, and the new style was also reflected in the process of shaping the image of Feitian.

For example, the Feitian in the second niche on the middle floor of the north wall (Figure 2.10) is completely different from the rough and bold style of Yungang Grottoes.





Figure 2.10 The image of Feitian in Longmen Grottoes

Source: Web image, 2024

Later, flying images of different styles appeared in many grottoes, including Gongxian Grottoes, Xiangtangshan Grottoes, Qingzhou Grottoes, etc. The images of the Feitian of Gongxian Grottoes are different from those of Longmen Grottoes, which are thin and thin. Instead, they have a round and full temperament. They maintain the healthy and heroic momentum of Yungang. The Feitian of Xiangtang Mountain is half-naked with a very strong posture and movements, which is reminiscent of the strong spirit of the northern people. The flying apsaras in Qingzhou Cave have very graceful figures, and some even have their bodies bent to 90 degrees. However, the body of the Feitian figure in the Qingzhou Cave turns very softly, the ribbons and skirts flow naturally, and especially the facial expressions are very peaceful and make people feel friendly. Therefore, with the changes of time and region, and different historical backgrounds, the images of Feitian also have their own characteristics.

### **2.2.5 Feitian artistic images that appeared in neighboring countries in the later period**

After Feitian was introduced to China from India and the Western Regions, its graceful shape was also accepted by neighboring countries, so the image of Feitian continued to spread from China to neighboring countries, especially Japan and South Korea. Zuigan Temple in Matsushima, Japan, is the most important Zen temple in

Northeast Japan and a priceless treasure trove of cultural relics. Above the central shrine in the main hall, there is a wooden beam frame with very fine carvings. There is a group of Japanese flying apsaras carved on the beam, which is quite reminiscent of Dunhuang. There are countless auspicious clouds behind them. Above this group of wood carvings are two figures of flying apsaras. These two flying apsaras are different from those in the Dunhuang Grottoes. They have wings, are also wrapped with long streamers, and are dressed in more complicated clothes (Figure 2.11).



Figure 2.11 The image of Feitian in the main hall of Zuigan Temple in Songdao, Japan

Source: Web image, 2011

The musical instruments among them are all common musical instruments in the Tang Dynasty of China. The carving craftsmanship of these ornaments is very exquisite, so these are also very important historical materials for musical instruments.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Analysis of the shapes and costumes of the artistic image of Feitian in Dunhuang murals**

For the Feitian image, the two parts of body shape and clothing are inseparable. Therefore, while studying Feitian's image and clothing, it is also essential to study his body posture and shape. The shapes and postures of the flying images in the Mogao Grottoes murals are diverse and there is no fixed pattern. Only by first having a certain understanding of the changes in his body posture and various postures can he more accurately analyze the changes in his clothing, and then make a more detailed analysis of the modeling and clothing aspects of the entire Feitian image. The image of Feitian in Dunhuang murals appeared at the time of the creation of the cave. Feitian's image, posture, clothing, artistic conception and style are constantly changing accordingly. The evolution history of Dunhuang Feitian costumes is roughly the same as the development history of Dunhuang art, which is divided into three stages. They are the period from the Sixteen Kingdoms to the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and the Five Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty.

#### **3.1 The modeling and costume characteristics of Feitian's artistic images during the Southern and Northern Dynasties**

The posture, costumes and artistic styles of the Feitian image are constantly changing. The costume art of Dunhuang Feitian is constantly changing with the evolution of the image of Feitian. According to its development process, the development of the costume elements of Feitian Art can be divided into three stages: rise, prosperity and decline: The sixteen countries to the Southern and Northern Dynasties are the rise of flying art. This period can be divided into four periods: Beiliang, Beiwei, Xiwei and Beizhou (Ruifang, 2018)



In the murals of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang during the Northern Liang Dynasty, most of the images of Feitian were male. During this period, Feitian's face was oval, with a straight nose, big eyes, a big mouth and big ears, a slightly short and thick body, and the small face was particularly obvious. The mural painters who were in the early stages of construction of the Mogao Grottoes were not very familiar with Buddhist art themes and foreign art paintings, so the Dunhuang murals at this period were still in the imitation stage.



Figure 3.1 The flying image of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang during the Northern Liang Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2014

The costumes of Feitian during the Liang Dynasty were also greatly influenced by the Western Regions. The upper body is half naked, and the lower body is wearing a long skirt. The arms are wrapped with streamers. The Feitian on the left wears an Indian-style crown on his head, while the Feitian on the right does not wear a crown. It can be seen from the picture that the clothes of this Feitian are simpler and the outline is rougher.

The costumes of Feitian during this period have the following characteristics: wearing a round bun or a bald head or wearing an Indian five-jeweled crown, with a half-naked upper body, a long skirt on the lower body, and a large scarf on the shoulders. However, due to oxidation over time, the bridge of the nose and eyes turned



white, and the shape, clothing, painting, color and other techniques are similar to those of the Feitian of the Western Regions.

The bold colors of the newly built Mogao Grottoes in the hands of the painters showed the rough and simple image of the flying sky, which also reflected the people at that time who had little understanding of Buddhist art and foreign art. Now it seems that Queen has a childish and simple beauty.

During the Northern Wei Dynasty, Buddhism began to rise across the country, and the Buddhist art from India was sinicized, showing a trend of combining beauty with simplicity and skill with clumsiness, showing an amazing spirit and power. During this period, some caves still generally retained the characteristics of the flying apsaras of the Western Regions, but the flying apsaras of some other caves had undergone obvious changes and gradually incorporated some Chinese characteristics. During this period, Feitian's face shape gradually changed from oval to slender, and his face was delicate, with small mouth and ears, and his facial features became harmonious and well-proportioned. The body proportions have also changed from the original rough and slender to slender, and the ratio of some flying-looking legs and feet is even twice that of the upper body.



Figure 3.2 The flying image of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang during the Northern Wei Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2011

During the Northern Wei Dynasty, Feitian had a round light on his head, some were wearing jade jewelery crowns, and some were not in buns. Some of the upper bodies are naked, and some wear Sangji Zhi. That is, there is still a rectangular underwear worn under the three clothes that covers the armpits, chest and left shoulder and reaches the waist. It is called Sangji Zhi. They wear long skirts on their lower bodies, with skirts and ribbons flying in the wind like wings. In addition, their flying postures have also become diverse. For example (Picture 3.2), the two figures are flying in the sky, one is holding flowers, and the other is scattering flowers to express celebration. The artist used eye-catching white lines to outline the outline of Feitian's long skirt and ribbons. Both Feitian are half-naked and wearing long skirts, with ribbons wrapped around their arms, and bracelets and neck rings. The colors used in the entire Feitian costume are brighter than those in the Northern Liang period.

Feitian in the Western Wei Dynasty formed the "Trinity" image of Feitian that merged China and the West under the comprehensive influence of the culture of the Western Regions, Indian Buddhism and Taoism in the Central Plains. Such as (Figure 3.3) Feitian image.



Figure 3.3 The image of Feitian in the Western Wei Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2010

During the Western Wei Dynasty, two types of Feitian costumes were the most prominent in terms of their image and clothing types.

The first is the Dunhuang-style image of the flying apsara decorated in the Western Regions (Figure 3.3). The two flying apsaras are bare-chested, wearing long skirts and long scarves. One of them beats a drum with both hands, and the other plays a recorder. After the discoloration of the murals, you can still see the concave and convex blooming effect passed down from the Western Regions. This type of flying apsara wears a crown or a sun-moon crown, with a half-naked upper body, or a monk's branch on the right side, a bead necklace and collar around the neck, a long scarf, a long skirt around the waist, and ribbons over the shoulders.

The second type is the Central Plains-style flying apron passed down from the Southern Dynasties (Figure 3.3). This flying figure has her hair in a double bun, her hands are in the shape of drums, she is wearing a gut skirt, and her arms are wrapped in a long scarf. The sky is dotted with countless flowing clouds, creating an overall dynamic and decorative effect. The flying apsaras depicted in this cave are unique to the Central Plains in the shape of elegant figures with clear bones. The whole shape is very rhythmic and can be regarded as a masterpiece among the images of flying apsaras in Dunhuang.

In the Northern Zhou Dynasty, the rulers of this period believed in Buddhism and had good relations with the Western Regions. Therefore, in this period, the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang once again appeared like the flying apsara image of the early Northern Liang Dynasty, which was full of characteristics of the Western Regions. During this period, Feitian had a round face, short body, strong body, rough lines, and the flying dynamics were still in a "V" shape.





Figure 3.4 The image of Feitian in the Northern Zhou Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2018

Feitian costumes in the Northern Zhou Dynasty also tend to have the characteristics of the Qiuci Grottoes. There are four flying apsaras painted on the south wall (Figure 3.4), which are Jiyue Feitian holding musical instruments and have the style of the early Western Regions Feitian. The Feitian of the Northern Zhou Dynasty had a round, egg-shaped face with white features, thick and short limbs, a strong body, a half-naked upper body, and a long skirt around the waist. The flying apsaras of the Northern Zhou Dynasty held various musical instruments, with long belts fluttering under their bodies, and ceiling flowers falling all around. These flying apsaras were playing and flying at the same time, and their flying posture was very light and graceful.

In the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes murals of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, Feitian's clothing often appeared in a kind of clothing called Sengzhi. There are three types of

monks' robes and five robes, which are collectively called dharma robes. The Sangzhi branch is one of the five robes. It is a rectangular piece of cloth used to cover the left shoulder and armpits while leaving the right shoulder uncovered. The Sengzhi branch began in the Sixteenth Kingdom. It is worn on the left shoulder, around the right armpit and lengthened to the waist. Such costumes were found in some caves during the Northern Zhou Dynasty (Figure 3.4). Many Buddha statues and monks wear it inside their cassocks. It can be inferred that the monk-only branch was most popular during the Northern Zhou Dynasty. Two styles can be derived from analyzing the way of wearing it from many pictures and written materials.

One is to fold a rectangular piece of fabric in half and wrap one corner around the right armpit to wrap around the body. Put the other corner on the left shoulder, and finally tie the two corners of the fabric behind your back, and place the belt in front of your body, or cover it on your left upper arm, making it look like a half-sleeve.

The other is roughly the same, folding a rectangular piece of fabric in half, wrapping one corner around the right armpit, wrapping one corner around the left shoulder and knotting the other corner behind the back, and tying the belt behind the back, exposing the left arm.

Although the Western Region-style image of flying apsaras reappeared, the Dunhuang flying apsaras painting method at this time had entered the category of Central Plains figure painting methods. The painting style and overall structure of the Northern Zhou Dynasty caves are new techniques that emerged after the Western Wei Dynasty. Its main feature is the strong Central Plains style, and the new content and form, namely painting techniques, jointly show vigorous vitality. The clothing aspect shows a diversified trend, or the upper body is half-naked, wearing monk's clothing. Or wearing a large robe from the Central Plains, with a complimentary robe and a wide belt. Or wearing a bun, long skirt, bare feet, and a tooth-flag-shaped skirt. During this period, the Central Plains-style painting style also appeared. The Central Plains style painting style takes line drawing as the main body and uses the Central Plains flat

painting method supplemented by color, changing the simple and crude form of the Western Region style in the past.

### **3.2 The shape and costume characteristics of the artistic image of Feitian in the Sui and Tang Dynasties**

The Sui and Tang Dynasties were the most prosperous period in the development of Mogao Grottoes murals. In the Mogao Grottoes of this period, there are the most types of images of flying apsaras, and their postures and costumes are also the richest. During this period, the image of Dunhuang Feitian gradually matured and developed to its peak period. During this period, Dunhuang Feitian slowly absorbed and integrated the features of Feitian from India, the Western Regions and other regions. In the process of innovation, it finally formed a completely Chinese image of Feitian. So I combine these two dynasties here for detailed study.

The Sui Dynasty was the stage of innovation and change for Dunhuang Feitian. The Sui Dynasty merged the Feitian style of the Central Plains style and the Western Region style, resulting in different face shapes and body shapes, with plump or delicate faces. There are strong and slim body types. Its diverse styles also laid a solid foundation for the Chinese trend of the development of Feitian art.

The shape of Feitian in the Tang Dynasty is more like that of women with the style of that time, and tends to be influenced by secularization, gradually entering the realistic realm of maid calligraphy and painting with the Chinese and folk style characteristics of that time. Currently, Feitian has completely broken away from the style of Western Region Feitian. But they still retain exquisite decorations such as bare upper body, exposed feet, armbands, and bracelets.

Summary of the characteristics of Feitian's clothing in the Sui and Tang Dynasties in Mogao Grottoes.

Head characteristics: During the Sui and Tang dynasties, the heads of Feitian were characterized by having their hair tied in a bun and wearing a crown, with treasure strings on both sides, and a few Feitian had a round light behind their heads. In the early Tang Dynasty, people began to wear high buns without wearing crowns. In the late Tang Dynasty, they wore high buns and wore exquisite and gorgeous ornaments on their heads.

Characteristics of the upper body: During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the upper body of Feitian was relatively simple, most of them were naked, and some wore monk's robes or exposed right cassocks, armpits, etc. During the Mid-Tang Dynasty, Xiangyun Feitian was naked from the waist up, with a necklace around his neck, yellow ribbons wrapped around his arms, and red bracelets and armbands.

Characteristics of the lower body: During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the lower body of Feitian was mostly a long skirt wrapped around the waist. The waist was tied with a waist skirt and a belt. The skirt was as long as around the hips. Some Feitian wore a double-layered waist skirt and tied a long bow or button-shaped belt in front of the waist. In the Sui Dynasty, the skirt length reached the ankle, barefoot, and the skirt body was close to the body. Then the skirt body gradually became wider and the skirt length gradually lengthened, enough to cover the feet. During the Tang Dynasty, floral patterns also appeared on the fabric of the skirt. The mid-Tang Dynasty performer Le Fei Tianxia wears a long black skirt and a blue waist skirt. The slender belt is tied in the shape of a double bow and is matched with yellow round jewelry in front of the waist.





Figure 3.5 Characteristics of Feitian's Clothing in the Sui and Tang Dynasties in Mogao Grottoes

Source: Web image, 2023

Characteristics of jewelry: During the Sui and Tang dynasties, Feitian warriors often wore crowns and earrings on their heads. There were treasure strings on both sides of the crown, a necklace on their neck, a silk draped over their shoulders, and armbands and bracelets on their arms. During the Mid-Tang Dynasty, Xiangyun Feitian wore a golden crown with rubies and sapphires on his head, a collar around his neck with three sapphires in the center, and gold bracelets with sapphires on his hands. Red ribbons wrapped around his arms and hung naturally on both sides of the body.

### 3.3 The modeling and clothing characteristics of Feitian's artistic images from the Five Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty

From the Five Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty, the murals during this period blindly imitated the flying apsaras of the Tang Dynasty without any innovation in terms of shape and dynamics, and the Feitian art in Dunhuang also declined.

The painting style of the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes murals during the Five Dynasties period continued the characteristics of the late Tang Dynasty, and the technique of lightly dyeing the burnt ink was widely used. This coloring technique has bright colors, and this technique is also reflected in Feitian, making Feitian's image very delicate.



Figure 3.6 Feitian murals in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes during the Five Dynasties Period

Source: Web image, 2023

Since the Feitian painting method in the late Tang Dynasty was too procedural and lacked novelty, many caves even used the same version, so no matter how superb the technique was, it could not cover up the artistic shortcomings. The flying apsaras in the murals of the Five Dynasties basically followed the pattern of the prosperous Tang Dynasty, but their expressions and dynamic depictions were relatively monotonous, indicating that the flying apsaras art had entered a period of decline.

The painting characteristics of the flying image of the Five Dynasties inherited the large skirts of the late Tang Dynasty, with white sarong sleeves, wider sleeves, and more complicated headdresses than before. During the Five Dynasties, Uighur

costumes were popular, including wearing a phoenix hairpin, a red robe with a lapel, and embroidered shoes.

Xixia was a minority political power established by the Dangxiang people in the northwest from 1038 to 1227. Some of the flying objects in the Xixia period in Mogao Grottoes follow the style of the Song Dynasty, and some have the unique style of Xixia. The biggest feature is that the characters, styles and folk customs of the Xixia Dangxiang people are integrated into the image of Feitian. During the Xixia period, Feitian had an oblong face, bulging cheeks, deep eyes and pointed nose, a strong body, and a strong sense of worldliness. The representative one is the two-dressed boy flying in the sky in Cave 97.



Figure 3.7 The flying sky mural in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes during the Western Xia Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2022

Not many caves have been preserved from the Yuan Dynasty, and there are also relatively few images of Feitian. Feitian's costumes during the Yuan Dynasty were relatively simple, without too many ornate ornaments, but they were still very delicate in style and color. For example, the four-body flying apsaras in Cave 3 of the Mogao Grottoes, among which the two-body flying apsaras on the north wall are more perfect in shape. In terms of dynamic modeling, the flying apsaras of the Yuan Dynasty do not have a strong sense of flying. The two flying apsaras are asymmetrical. They are realistic faces and shapes of the Central and Western Asian peoples, reflecting the regional cultural characteristics of the time (Figure 3.8).





Figure 3.8 Feitian murals in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes during the Yuan Dynasty

Source: Web image, 2011

### 3.4 The perfect combination of costumes and shapes in the Dunhuang art image Feitian

Through the previous analysis of Feitian's costumes according to different periods, we can summarize some common clothing combinations of Feitian images in Dunhuang murals. Next, we summarize them in the form of pictures and descriptions. The clothes in the picture are matched with the same color scheme, and simple renderings are drawn with ocher red and turquoise, the most common colors of Feitian clothes in Dunhuang, to clearly reflect the different artistic expression effects of different matching methods of Feitian clothes.



Figure 3.9 Kasaya/ Long skirt + silk/ Long skirt + monk's neck + silk

Source: Web image, 2023



As shown in the figure (Figure 3.9), this kind of clothing is commonly found in Cave 303, 305, and 397. Take Cave 305 of the Sui Dynasty as an example. This kind of apsara wears a cassock, with the right shoulder exposed, the cassock is as long as the feet, and the feet are bare. It is more casually knotted at the shoulders. Judging from the pleats on the cassock and the movement of Feitian in the overall image, the relatively loose shape allows Feitian's originally naked upper body to be covered up without losing the beauty of the fluttering clothes of Feitian. No silk, just a cassock to dance, simple and elegant. Armless necklaces, bracelets and other accessories. The cassock is mainly blue and black, with red edges around the cassock.

Take the Feitian in Cave 305 of Mogao Grottoes as an example (Figure 3.10). This kind of flying apsaras are all naked on the upper body, wearing a long skirt on the lower body, and a belt tied around the waist. They are crossed and knotted in front of the body to form an X shape. After the knotting, the remaining streamers flutter with the movement of the body, making it light and elegant. The hem of the skirt floats up in a triangle to both sides, giving it a strong decorative effect. The overall look of the long skirt and silk fabric is closer to the clothing of folk women, and the image of Feitian painted by craftsmen is a kind of transcendence of secularization.

Take the Feitian in Cave 303 of the Mogao Grottoes as an example (Figure 3.11). These Apsaras wear monk's clothes on the upper body, with their right shoulders exposed, and long skirts on the lower body. The skirt reaches the feet and does not expose the feet. Judging from the fluttering shape of the long skirt, the skirt body is relatively close to the body, and the hem is not large, like a flame. Her hair is tied up in a bun and she wears a crown with no precious silk ribbons on both sides. The silk is wrapped around her arms, forming a ring in the air that flutters naturally. Armless necklaces, bracelets, necklaces and other accessories. In terms of clothing matching, the overall effect pays more attention to details. The monk's robe is similar to the cassock described before, but the short style features make the flying shape more smooth.



Figure 3.10 Long skirt+waist skirt+belt/long skirt+double-layer waist skirt+belt

Source: Web image, 2023

Take the Feitian in Cave 158 of the Mogao Grottoes as an example (Figure 3.12). This kind of Feitian is half-naked on the upper body and wears a long skirt on the lower body. The long skirt is tied with a waist skirt. The slimming change of the waist skirt wrapping the hips makes the figure obviously slim. The everted skirt beautifies the local decorative effect. The belt of the long skirt hangs down naturally, and the silk wraps around the arms and the body makes a downward dive. The combination of clothing makes the flying shape more dynamic.

Take the Feitian costume in Cave 39 of the Mogao Grottoes as an example (Figure 3.13). This type of flying figure is naked on the upper body, wearing a long skirt on the lower body, and a double-layered waist skirt. The silk is wrapped around the arms, and the tail end of the silk flutters in the wind, reflecting the dynamics of flying in the sky. There are floral patterns on the skirts and silk fabrics. This floral decorative pattern was very popular during the Tang Dynasty. Feitian's image pays more attention to its layering in clothing matching than before. The overall effect is more in line with the remarkable temperament of the powerful national power in the prosperous Tang Dynasty.



Figure 3.11 Underarm + Long Skirt + Waist Skirt + Silk / Underarm + Long Skirt + Waist Skirt + Silk

Source: Web image, 2023

There are two ways to combine armpits, long skirts, waist skirts, and silk fabrics. The first one is as shown in the figure (Figure 3.14). Take the attire of Jile Feitian in Cave 15 of Yulin Grottoes as an example. The Feitian is half-naked, with his armpits draped diagonally, and a celestial robe draped behind him. This type of Feitian clad with celestial robes is relatively rare. The lower body is worn with a long skirt and waist skirt, with a slender belt tied in the shape of a double bow. The silk is wrapped around the arms, and the streamers form upward curling rings. The skirt is light and elegant, with a soft texture. The upper body is matched with simple armpits and more complex clothing on the lower body, which makes the overall effect more prominent. The image of the flying sky is fluffy and life-like when flying.

The second type takes the Feitian in Cave 196 of Mogao Grottoes as an example (Figure 3.15). This type of Feitian has a half-naked upper body, with armpits wrapped diagonally. Slender silk is wrapped around both arms, with armlets on the arms, and a necklace on the neck. The colors of the long skirt are mainly red, blue, green, black and white. The color of the long skirt and the apron on the waist are different. The

apron is usually green, and the silk is single color or double color on the front and back, and both appear. The slender Feitian image, when matched with clothing, not only reflects the smooth lines, but also reflects the sense of grace and luxury.





## **Chapter 4**

### **The artistic beauty of Dunhuang Feitian murals and their influence on modern art**

#### **4.1 Analysis on the application of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in modern clothing design**

Modern dress design cleverly combines high technology with the design elements of Dunhuang Feitian mural art, adding national artistry to dress styles, color matching and decorative patterns. Dunhuang Feitian mural art has always enjoyed high praise in the world art circle and has an extremely important status. In recent years, the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals has been frequently used by designers in the design of red carpet dresses and performance dresses.

The application of linear beauty of shape in modern dress design. The dress worn by Song Zuying at the opening ceremony of the Guangzhou Asian Games. The design of the collar and chest were inspired by the long and elegant lines of the shawls and ribbons of the characters in the Dunhuang Feitian mural (Figure 4- shown in 1). This dress draws on the shape of Feitian's clothing, showing a very infectious rhythmic beauty and linear beauty of shape that travels through time and space. Song Zuying's silk floor-length skirt showed graceful and restrained linear beauty in stillness. However, with the movement of the wearer's body, the beauty of fluttering and flexible curves is revealed. The position of the waistline is raised at the waist section, effectively stretching the lines, making the overall proportions look slenderer and straight.

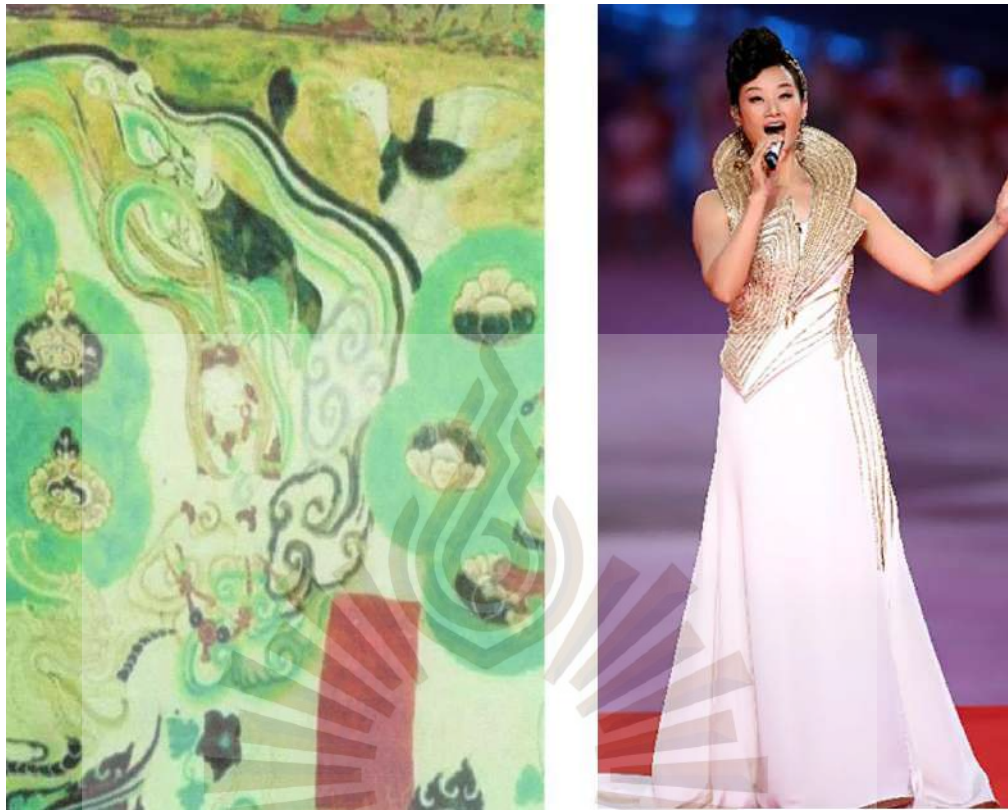


Figure 4.1 "Smile" sung by Song Zuying at the opening ceremony of the Guangzhou Asian Games  
 Source: Web image, 2011

This dress took half a year to complete the design and production. The main element used is the cloud and thunder pattern in the Dunhuang Feitian mural art. Its free and graceful lines highlight the elegant and melodious artistic conception that the designer hopes to display. The outer outline of the dress adopts the shape of the shawl and ribbons in the image of Dunhuang Feitian. The free and unrestrained lines make people feel the light and elegant visual effect and aesthetic psychological needs of the dress.

The linear beauty of the artistic expression of Dunhuang Feitian murals is vividly displayed in this dress. The designer seamlessly applies the elements of the classical Dunhuang Feitian murals to modern dress designs, integrating ancient and modern

design concepts, integrating Chinese and Western art and culture, and embodies the aesthetic idea of "accepting a wide range of talents" in Dunhuang Feitian mural art.

The application of color contrast and harmonious beauty in modern dress design. Zhang Jingchu wore this dress at the Venice Film Festival (as shown in Figure 4.2). This dress is designed with the Dunhuang Feitian mural as the creative background. The designer used a large area of sapphire blue and small blocks of bright yellow to contrast and harmonize, making the colors bright and soft, which reflects the artistic beauty of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in color contrast and harmony in dress design. The elegance of peacock blue and the dazzling brightness of yellow, as well as the collision of warm and cold tones, give people a strong visual impact. The use of a large number of floral waist decorations makes the whole dress, worn by Zhang Jingchu, as charming, elegant and beautiful as a fairy walking out of the Dunhuang Feitian mural in Mogao Grottoes (as shown in Figure 4.2). The design of the yoke and sloping collar fully demonstrates the dreamy artistic conception and aesthetic value of Chinese classical cultural colors combined with Western modern dress forms.



Figure 4.2 Venice Film Festival "Dreams of the Tang Dynasty" dress

Source: Web image, 2019

Pace Wu stunned everyone when she debuted at the Venice Film Festival with her "Dunhuang Freehand Painting" (shown in Figure 4.3). The beauty of the dress perfectly blends with Wu Pace's temperament. The floral patterns of the Dunhuang Feitian mural are used as pattern decoration, giving people a flowery illusion. The floral pattern is mixed and embroidered on the tulle using embroidery, so that the dress presents a two-dimensional effect instead of just a flat decoration. This dress applies the Dunhuang art of China's ancient Silk Road to modern dress design. The designer used the contrast between the size, spacing and gathering of flower patterns to showcase the splendid artistic and cultural charm of Dunhuang Feitian on the world stage. Most of the Feitian murals in Dunhuang feature musicians playing, singing, and dancing, so floral decoration has become one of the patterns that mainly carries the theme and expresses peace.



Figure 4.3 "Dunhuang Freehand" The dress worn by Pace Wu at the Cannes Film Festival

Source: Web image, 2020



The ancient Dunhuang Feitian mural art was introduced to China from the Western Regions, India and other countries, and contains a strong artistic culture of the Western Regions. Modern dress design will extract its artistic elements and integrate them into popular Western design concepts. The large number of flower patterns are only used as a carrier to emphasize the artistic beauty of the decorative patterns of the Dunhuang Feitian murals. This dress combines the Eastern bellyband shape with the Western tail style. The color contrasts between rose pink and emerald, green, the contrast of floral patterns, and the contrast of tulle and silk materials. This kind of contrast further highlights the role and beauty of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in the application of contrast in modern dress art design.

#### **4.2 Analysis on the development prospects of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in modern dress design**

To apply the restrained beauty of Dunhuang Feitian mural art to modern dress design, we must not only pay attention to the use of Chinese artistic elements, but also grasp the pulse of fashion trends and pay attention to the fashion trends of modern dress design. Integrating the subtle and restrained aesthetic value of the East into the avant-garde and open design of Western culture, and comprehensively applying the design thinking in Eastern art aesthetics, the dress design conveys the profound ideological and cultural heritage of the Dunhuang Feitian murals.

Dunhuang Feitian murals have achieved high achievements in the history of world culture and art with their exquisite mural techniques, lifelike characters, and ingenious structural design. The Feitian mural art of Dunhuang has extremely high artistic value with its unique artistic beauty. Domestic and foreign aesthetic researchers have spoken highly of Dunhuang art.

Among the Dunhuang murals, especially Feitian's costumes, they best reflect the artistic aesthetic characteristics of Dunhuang murals in Mogao Grottoes. Graceful, elegant, and noble costumes were the most common styles in Dunhuang Feitian

murals during the Tang Dynasty. From this we can see that the Dunhuang Feitian mural art is highly decorative and has the aesthetic characteristics of gorgeous costume art.

The positioning of the innovative brand development is based on the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals as the main line, the long history of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes as the background, the shape and color of the Dunhuang Feitian image as the decorative means, and the use of modern dresses as the form of expression, presented in front of the wearer. The artistic image of Feitian and the decorative patterns of Dunhuang murals are used in modern dress design to show the clean and elegant oriental temperament and charm. Always grasp the vane of fashion trends and closely connect Chinese national elements with fashion. Designers from many countries gathered to design together with different cultural backgrounds and diverse design thinking integrated into the art of Feitian murals in Dunhuang, China. Dresses came into being to serve the needs of people's social life, and their main purpose is people-oriented. Therefore, brand dresses should be committed to the development and research of improving the dress's beauty and fit, integrating the wearer's temperament into the dress design, and tailoring the dress to pursue comfort and fit while highlighting the beauty of the female body. The elements of classical Chinese Dunhuang flying apsaras are transformed into different forms and used in dress design to create aesthetic styles that may be subtle and restrained or passionate and unrestrained. The overall expression of the Eastern Dunhuang flying apsaras art is the aesthetic idea of "the unity of nature and man". The dress brand is positioned to be worn by people who participate in solemn ceremonial occasions such as ceremonies, stage performances, social evening parties, etc. to show their unique artistic taste. The dress brand promotion created by using the Dunhuang Feitian mural art can enhance the dress brand image through brand exhibitions, expand popularity, guide consumer customers, and increase market share. Enhance the personality and self-awareness of the dress, focus on the unique artistic design beauty, and continuously expand the brand's influence in the art and clothing circles. The customized target market has greatly improved its influence and popularity through media publicity and the

communication effect brought by celebrity customized dresses and performance dresses.



Figure 4.4 Designer Lawrence Hsu

Source: Web image, 2023

Drawing on the design concept of dress designer Lawrence Xu. Lawrence Xu's design concept is to perfectly combine ancient Chinese traditional elements with modern dress creativity (as shown in Figure 4-4), interpret thousands of years of cultural charm through design, and preserve the form of dress in my country's cultural heritage to the world. Stage design concept. Modern dresses have received more and more attention in international exchanges because they have a strong sense of visibility and recognition. Dresses, as a means of communication that takes precedence over language, silently display the cultural connotation of China for thousands of years. China's long history can provide a steady stream of materials for dress design. "Chinese style taking an international route" is the design style that Lawrence Xu insists on. The artistic image of Dunhuang Feitian combined with the Western mermaid shape is the main source of design inspiration for the "Dunhuang Freehand" design for the Cannes Film Festival designed and produced by Lawrence Hsu for Pace Wu.



Figure 4.5 Dress designed using the artistic elements of Dunhuang Feitian murals

Source: Web image, 2023

Innovative development of dress designer design concepts. When applying the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals in dress design, we should pay attention to the in-depth exploration, induction and integration of sources of inspiration, and the analysis and arrangement of materials. The collision of Eastern and Western cultures and the interweaving of mural art and costume art (as shown in Figure 4.5) have made the design material of Dunhuang Feitian widely used in modern dresses, thereby achieving greater success on the world stage.

Innovative development of dress design works. Dunhuang Feitian mural art, as a new idea for the innovative development of dress design works, has been recognized and praised by the world's fashion industry. Feitian art with a rich cultural and



historical atmosphere is extremely attractive to every designer. The Feitian mural art in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes has a very high artistic realm and gives people a graceful and shocking visual experience. The appearance expression in dress design is mainly based on style, color, decorative pattern, fabric and technology. With the rapid development of science and technology in recent years, the dress design industry has boomed. Innovations in fabric materials, developments in dyeing and weaving technology, innovations in embroidery techniques, and technology have brought about huge changes in the expression of modern dress design. Technology has driven innovation in the dress industry and gradually developed from traditional handicrafts to semi-intelligent modern design and production processes. It changes the development direction of dress design, guides the innovative development of brand design in the dress industry, affects people's aesthetic concepts of modern dresses, and promotes the development and inheritance of traditional culture represented by the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals.

Innovative development of fabric materials in dress design. The shape, color and pattern of Dunhuang Feitian mural art are all based on the selection of suitable fabric materials. The fabric material of the dress provides a wide range of possibilities and diversity for style design. The development of technology has given dress design more choices in the use of fabrics and materials. The silhouette of the dress changes in style through changes in clothing fabric materials. The use of fabric materials suitable for the dress style plays a vital role in dress design. As an ancient Chinese civilization, silk is often chosen by designers as the main fabric for modern dress designs. The designer cleverly uses the contrast between traditional fabrics and innovative fabrics in the design of modern dresses, making the dresses have the spirit of ancient Chinese culture without losing the artistic beauty of modern fashion.

Understanding the performance of fabric materials and predicting the effects after styling is of irreplaceable significance for the innovation and development of dress design. On this basis, choosing fabric materials that are suitable for the artistic style of Dunhuang Feitian murals and the theme of dress design, and re-creating them is a

common expression technique for modern dress design. The main purpose is to highlight the beauty of the dress shape and design in the form of contrasting fabrics. For example, the dress worn by Song Zuying at the Guangzhou Asian Games was designed with heavy silk material and exposed leather as the contrast. It combined the soft and resolute temperament of the wearer and showed the dress's smart, elegant and strong shape. The contrast between thin and thick, soft and tough fabrics has become an artistic feature that highlights individuality in dress design and expresses the collision between traditional culture and modern dress forms.

Innovative development of dyeing and weaving technology in dress color design. Color plays a special and important role in dress design. The color of the dress is generally completed by dyeing and weaving techniques that combine traditional and modern techniques. One of the most important attributes of a dress is to increase recognition, and the first thing a dress makes an impression on is its color. The high brightness, strong contrast and coordinated use of colors will naturally give people a strong visual effect. In addition, the color of the dress has strong national cultural characteristics, which is naturally impressive. When drawing on the colors of Dunhuang Feitian mural art, we must understand its essence and connotation. The contribution of color is also indispensable for the high artistic attainments of Dunhuang Feitian Art. The colors of Dunhuang Feitian art may be strong or elegant, but the overall use of colors maintains harmony and unity in brightness, which is the conventional color principle of Dunhuang Feitian mural art.

The strong color impact of the Dunhuang Feitian murals is impressive. Modern dyeing and weaving technology is used to vividly express the gorgeous flying shapes, colors, patterns and decorative colors in the Dunhuang Feitian murals. The inheritance of traditional dyeing and weaving techniques and the innovation of modern dyeing and weaving techniques make the colors in the Dunhuang Feitian mural art more perfectly convey the atmosphere of Chinese oriental culture and the modern sense of dress design. The Dunhuang Feitian murals inherit and condense history, making the strong contrast of colors highly integrated to express the harmonious connotation of Chinese

culture and art. The use of color in the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals is just right. High intensity contrasting colors, adding one point is too strong, and missing one point is too simple, which brings new challenges to the dress design, dyeing and weaving technology.

Innovative development of embroidery technology in dress pattern design. The application of patterns in dress design is the most extensive and prominent. Baoxiang flowers and arabesque patterns are often used. They appear most frequently in the Dunhuang Feitian murals and have the most decorative effect. The Dunhuang Feitian art pattern is decorated with independent patterns, which expresses the subjectivity and elementality of the pattern. You can also use symmetrical patterns for decoration to make the overall dress look more dignified and quieter. There are also cases where highlighting partial or three-dimensional designs is used as the main decorative technique. The effect produced by the dress is well-proportioned, the decoration breaks the old spatial pattern, and the beauty of artistic decoration is the alternation of virtual and real.

In the design inspired by the art of Dunhuang Feitian murals, embroidery, as a representative of traditional Chinese craftsmanship, is widely used in the design of Chinese-style dresses. Dress design expresses the form of clothing that highlights oneself and pursues individuality. The application of the design elements of Huang Feitian mural art in dress design naturally requires the addition of embroidery, a specific form of decoration. Embroidery as a decoration method breaks the flat decorative pattern and highlights the three-dimensional two-dimensional decorative space effect. There are many differences in embroidery methods depending on the region. The four major Chinese embroideries have also become the four representative famous embroideries in ancient Chinese embroidery crafts. In addition to hand embroidery, the development of science and technology has brought embroidery technology into a modern stage. Machine embroidery can be produced more quickly, conveniently and in batches, becoming an important means of expression for dress design.

Taking the Feitian murals of Dunhuang as the basis for artistic considerations, the combination of traditional embroidery and modern machine embroidery makes the pattern decoration design of modern dresses not only have cultural heritage but also speed up the production cycle.





## **Chapter 5**

### **Design and creation**

#### **5.1 Design ideas of Dunhuang Feitian mural art in modern clothing**

In the early stage of the design, my main design idea was to combine the characteristics of Dunhuang Feitian's clothing and the picture style of Dunhuang murals with modern clothing to create a set of designs. It not only retains the charm of ancient Dunhuang murals, but also combines elements of modern clothing, making this set of clothing both beautiful and practical.

The fabric colors of this set of design works adopt the three most common background colors in Dunhuang murals, which are ivory white, beige and light bean green. A very important feature of the Dunhuang Feitian costumes described previously is its lightness and elegance. Therefore, my design this time uses chiffon fabric, which is characterized by being soft and drapey. It can express the light and elegant characteristics of Dunhuang Feitian clothing in the design.

In the form of a basic shirt, the fabric and shape are partially modified to make the overall effect of the garment lighter and more elegant. Together with the patterns on the clothing, it can better reflect the characteristics of Dunhuang Feitian clothing.



Figure 5.1 Design Concept Picture 1

In terms of clothing patterns, there are three sources of inspiration. The first is the most common streamers in Feitian clothing. The reason why "Feitian" can "fly" is because it relies on the power of streamers. The streamers wrap around Feitian's body lightly and flutter in the wind. Painters often use ribbons to express the image of Feitian flying in the sky, so streamers are a particularly important part of Feitian costumes. In this set of designs, I added some lines that resemble streamers, and the color is also the color of the streamers that often appear on Feitian in Dunhuang murals. Here it is mainly depicted at the edge of the clothing fabric or at the connection between the upper and lower pieces of fabric, wrapped around the clothing like the streamers in the murals. In terms of the shape of the shirt, irregular cutting methods are used on the edges, so that the streamer-style lines at the edge of the garment can be like the streamers in Feitian clothing, reflecting the irregular feeling of fluttering in the wind.



Figure 5.2 Design Concept Picture 2

The second point is the overall effect of the image of Feitian in Dunhuang murals. The flying images mostly appear on the background around the main statues in Dunhuang murals and are often used to fill in the gaps. The same idea came from this, and some restored line drawings from the original murals were used here, and large blank spaces were hand-painted on the clothing, making the entire clothing more like the Dunhuang murals.

## 5.2 Display of design results

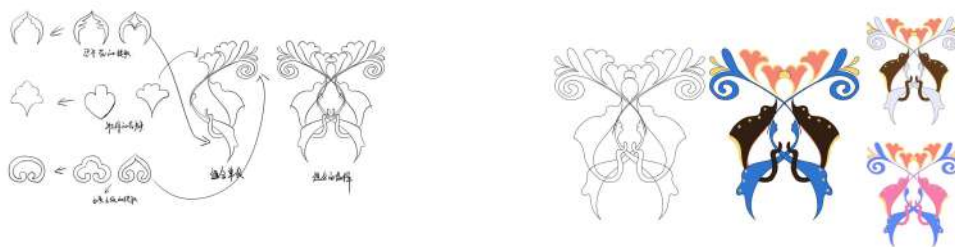


Figure 5.3 Design Concept Picture 1



Figure 5.4 Design Concept Picture 2



Figure 5.5 Design Concept Picture 3





Figure 5.6 Design Concept Picture 4



Figure 5.7 Design Concept Picture 5

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