

The Form and Significance of the Portrait of the King's Donors in the Grottoes of Kucha-Using the Image of tiptoeing as a Case Study*

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Abstract

The preserved 6-7th century portraits of royal supporters from the Kucha Caves in Xinjiang show a “patterned” costume and appearance, especially the “standing on tiptoe” posture and the pictorial structure of multiple figures standing side by side, which have a strong connection with Iranian and Central Asian art. The unique “standing on tiptoe” style of the Kucha Grottoes mural depicts a donor pattern that is neither found in the painting and sculpture of Dunhuang or other regions of China, nor seen in Gandhara reliefs, Parthian art, or Near Eastern art of the Parthian period. However, is frequently seen in painting and sculpture from Iran to Central Asia between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD. The origin of the art of Iran and Central Asia the forms of expression are related to the construction of royal identity, religious rituals, and the viewing habits and aesthetic concepts of the people of Kucha. The small number of inscriptions preserved in the Kucha Caves on the donor's figures indicate that these Kucha kings were real people, and it is highly likely that the painters had met them. However, the way the feet of the figures are drawn is not realistic, but rather stylized, creating a perfect visual pattern that transcends ordinary reality, indicating that the painters were aiming to present all the Kucha kings as an “idealized” manner. The pictorial pattern of “standing on tiptoe” posture influenced by Iranian Sasanian and Central Asian Sogdian art is evident.

Keywords: The Portrait of the Donors, Tiptoeing Image, Iran, Central Asia, Ritual.



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Introduction

The Kizil Caves in Xinjiang have preserved many portraits of Kucha's donors, dating from the 6th to 7th centuries; These portraits are mostly painted on both sides of the front door of the main chamber or on the inner and outer walls of the left and right niches. The figures depicted are tall, with distinctive costumes and appearances, and their feet are depicted in a very formalized manner: pointed boots, heels up, toes down, with the left and right feet of two adjacent figures overlapping.

There has been much discussion but no debate about these donors' costume, identity, or the location of these figures in the caves. This paper focuses on the relationship between the "tiptoe" pose in Kucha Grottoes' portraits and the construction of the identity of the royal family; It traces the origin of this pictorial pattern, and examines the intentions of the bearers as reflected in the images. This analysis aims to understand the relationship between form and meaning in the Kucha royal portraits.

The unique standing posture of the donors' statue in Kucha caves

Many of the caves in the Kizil Grottoes in Xinjiang depict standing figures of male and female donors on both sides of the front door of the main chamber as well as on inner and outer walls of the left and right niches, dating around 6th and 7th centuries. There are several reasons why we are not able to fully explore these figures including the repeated destruction of the Kizil Grottoes, especially the collapse of the front room, the destruction of the front wall of the main room, and the serious peeling of the walls. The main caves with surviving figures are the cave 27th, 34th, 58th, 69th, 98th, 101st, 104th, 118th, 126th, 171st, 175th, 178th, 179th, 189th, 192nd, 193rd, 195th, 224th, 227th, etc. (Jia Yingyi and Qi Xiaoshan, 2002-302). The Germany archeologists removed effigies from caves 7, 8, 67, 80, 179, 199, 205, and others.

The early period portraits of the donors (Fig. 1) are mainly painted on either side of the door in the front wall of the main room, as seen in Caves 38, 171, and 118. The higher-ranking donors, such as kings, queens and princes, are depicted in a standing position, while the lower-ranking ones are showing kneeling position. By the 6th century, the status of the votaries was increasing, mainly on the inner walls of the niches on either side of the main chamber, that is next to the main statue. The figures became increasingly taller, almost life-size, and this continued into the 7th century. Upon examining all the standing figures of the worshippers that have been preserved, we will find that they are uniformly dressed and stand on their toes, a style that Glunwiddel referred to as the patterned figures.

For example, in Cave 8 of the Kizil Grottoes, the left and right canopies of the back room are each painted with eight figures of the worshippers, known as the "Sixteen Swordsmen" (十六劍士) (A. Grunwedel, 2001: 101-102). Their hair falls at the shoulders and they wear a single lapel, narrow-sleeved, belted robe with a collar and sleeves partially trimmed with edges at the top. Underneath, they wear narrow-slit

pants and boots with pointed toes pointing upward, standing side by side with their toes pointing downward. All wear long swords at the waist, and the collars, belts, and robes of some of the worshippers' clothes are decorated with a united pearl pattern filled with boar's head or flowers (Wu Tao and Wen Aiqing, 1996: 50-55). This fresco, depicting sixteen swordsmen, was stripped away by the German archaeologists (Albert von Le Coq, 2006: 273). Grunwedel was the first to notice the singularity of expression and the programmatic content of these portraits. He believes that the artist used the same translucent templates when painting these portraits, and that these templates can also be used in reverse, simply by varying the arm pose and symbols (A. Grunwedel, 2001: 101-102).



Fig. 1: Donors' figures in Cave 8, Kizil Grottoes (Zhao Li, *Overseas Kizil Cave Mural Painting and Cave Restoration Image Collection*. Shanghai: Shanghaishuhua Chubanshe, 2018: 14-15.)

A group of portraits of worshippers is painted on the lower north side of the door of the east wall of Cave 205 in the Kizil Grottoes; the Brahmin inscriptions above the portraits indicate that the two worshippers on the left side of the portraits are the King and Queen of the Kucha kingdom. Their feet are also shown in a "standing on tiptoe" posture, which is significantly different from the standing posture of the monks next to them.

A group of four donors figures are painted on the inner side wall of the canal to the right of the central pillar in Cave 19, Kumutura; the first figure in line has a halo, and is wearing a long tunic with short sleeves; the edges of the tunic are adorned with very wide trimmings, and a very wide breast-belt, and a belt of round pieces joined together at the waist; he also has with the hilt of a longsword hanging from his belt and holding a censer held in the right hand, and the hilt of the sword held at the waist in his left hand.

Behind him there are two groups of portraits; the first group consists of 3 (2 men and 1 woman) while the second group consists of 3 males, with similar facial features and hairstyles. The male donors are all wearing robes with lapels, short sleeves, colored trim at the edges, and have long swords and short daggers at their waists. The female donors have similar facial features and hairstyle as the men, and their upper garment style is similar to the upper part of the male feeder's statue robe, differing in the long skirts worn underneath. They do not wear swords at their waists and share a common stance of standing with their toes pointing downwards and their feet overlapping. A group of seven individuals is also depicted on the inner side wall of the canal to the left of the central column of this cave; two guiding monks are at the forefront while the remaining five individuals appear to be from the same family. Their appearance and clothing style resemble those figures on the right-side wall of the canal and they also have the stance of standing on their toes. Grunwedel identifies them as a pair of parents and their three sons (A. Grunwedel, 2001: 49).

There are also a few portraits of donors painted in narrative and story paintings. One example can be found in Cave 67 of the Kizil Caves, where the donor is depicted in a story involving a karmic Buddha (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Kucha Donors' figures in Cave 67, Kizil Grottoes (Zhao Li, *Overseas Kizil Cave Mural Painting and Cave Restoration Image Collection*. Shanghai: Shanghaishuhua Chubanshe, 2018: 53.)

Similar images of Kucha's donor figures can be seen in Cave 17, Cave 11, Cave 30, Cave 67 (Red Dome Cave), Cave 69, Cave 104, Cave 171, Cave 192, Cave 189, Cave 199, Cave 207 (Painter's Cave) of the Kyzyl Grotto, Cave 23 and Cave 17 of the Kumutura Grotto and Cave 13, Cave 14 and Cave 30 of the Kyzyl Gaha Grotto, dating from the 6th to 7th centuries.

Constructing the identity of the Kucha donors' figures

What is the identity of the many figures standing on tiptoe? We know from the inscriptions of the worshippers that most of them were members of the Kucha royal family. For example, in Cave 205 of the Kizil Grottoes, a group of worshippers are painted on the lower left side of the front wall of the main room (Fig.3 (Xin Jiang Kucha Institute, 2018: 59), with Brahmi letters above the figures:

“Kuci[mahā](de)[vyā]svaya(m)pra[bh](ā) (The Great Queen of Kucha, svaya(m) pra[bh](ā)” (Jorinde Ebert, 2015: 75).

According to the donor’s inscription, the woman in question is the Queen of Kucha, whose name is svaya(m)pra[bh](ā). Some Sanskrit scriptures were found in Caves 66 and 67 of the Kizil Caves, recording the names of six kings and one queen including Tottik and his wife svaya(m)pra[bh](ā) (Gérard Bézard, 1988: 108). This name is consistent with the name of the Queen of Kucha in Cave 205 of the Kizil Grottoes, so it can be assumed that the male votive figures located in front of the Queen in Cave 205 are likely the King of Kucha.

The German scholar Lüders believes that this king was Tottika (Heinrich Lüders, 1940: 526-546), the king of Kucha at the end of the Sui Dynasty. Ji Xianlin theorizes that the king of Kucha, Bai Su Nizhi, who parried during the Daye period (605-618A.D.) of the Sui dynasty, may be the transliteration of Tottika (Ji Xianlin, 2010: 260). This suggests that Cave 205 was built in the early 7th century and that the figures in the cave are of the King and Queen of Kucha as well as of their family members.

A male donor figure is painted on the east side of the door on the south wall of the main chamber of Cave 69 in the Kizil Caves (Fig.4), with a line of text above his head indicating that he was a member of the royal family of the Kuz. Some scholars translate this line of text as Brahmi (Xin Jiang Kucha Institute, 2000: 81), while others translate it as Sanskrit (Qing Zhaorong, 2013: 395). Although, there are differences between these two translations, both agree that this donor is the king of Kucha, Sufa Boshi.

The Old Tang Dynasty Book (《旧唐书》) records:

After Tang Gaozong became the reigning emperor, King Suvaposhi, the king of Kucha, came to worship; after Suvaposhi died, his son Suvadie succeeded to the throne. In the fourth year of Zhen Guan period (629A.D.), Suvadie sent an ambassador to dedicate horses to the Tang Dynasty, and when Suvadie died, his brother succeeded to the throne (Jiu Tangshu Xiyu Zhuan, 1975: 5303-5304).

This document lists the names of three kings of Kucha, one of whom is named Suvaposhi. This name is also associated with the male donor of Cave 69 in the Kizil Grotto; providing evidence that cave was excavated by the royal family of Kucha.

Additionally, inscriptions of the Kucha kings have been found in Caves 75, 211, 39, and 221 of the Kizil Grottoes and Caves 12 and 25 of the Kizil Gaha Grottoes (Qing Zhaorong, 2013: 397-408). They are all depicted in similar costumes and hair styles, and they are all “standing on their toes in a similar” posture.

The 12 statues of donors in the left and right canals of Caves 13 and 14 in the Kizil Gaha Grottoes (both dating from the 6th to 7th centuries) (Jia Yingyi and Qi Xiaoshan, 2002: 363.) are similar in costume and stance to the above-mentioned statues of the Kucha royal family donors and are presumed to come from the same family (Fig.5). The main difference is that two of the statues have offerings with the earth god depicted at their feet of the statue. It looks like the god of the earth is holding up the donors (Peng Jie, 2007: 192-193).



Fig. 3: Donors' figures in Cave 205, Kizil Grottoes (Zhao Li, *Overseas Kizil Cave Mural Painting and Cave Restoration Image Collection*. Shanghai: Shanghaishuhua Chubanshe, 2018: 115)

The style of the image of the earth god holding up a human being can also be observed in the statue of the Great Pagoda of Rewak in Khotan (Fig.6)(M. Aurel Stein, 1907: XIV); similar images can be found in the murals at the ruins of the Buddhist temple of Bugai Uyulaik (和田县布盖乌于来克) in Khotan County, the statue of the Buddhist at the temple of Topluk Dun in Cele County, the murals at the ruins of the Buddhist temple of Balawast in Cele County, are similar to the murals at the Buddhist temple of Dandan Urik in Cele County(Xinjiang Wenwukaoguanjiesuo, 2005: 8-19). The statue of the earth god in the frescoes of the Dandan Urik Buddhist temple dates



Fig. 4: Donors' figures in Cave 69, Kizil Grottoes (The Complete Collection of Chinese Art Classification, Vol. 2, Tianjin: Tianjin Renminmeishu Chubanshe and Xinjiang Meishusheyang Chubanshe, 1995: 109.)



Fig.5 Kucha donors and the earth Gods' figures in Cave 14, Kizil Gaha Grottoes (The Complete Collection of Chinese Art Classification, Vol.5: Tianjin: Tianjin Renminmeishu Chubanshe and Xinjiang Meishusheyang Chubanshe, 1995: 112).



Fig. 6: The earth God's statue of the Great Pagoda of Rewak Temple in Khotan (M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan, Detailed report of archaeological explorations in Chinese Turkestan*. 2 vols., Oxford, 1907, XIV)

back to the 4th-5th centuries predating similar images found in the frescoes of the Kizil Gaha caves (Jia Yingyi and Qi Xiaoshan, 2002: 198). The earth gods found at Dunhuang are frescoes, streamers and paper works, all of which are later than the images of earth gods in the Xinjiang caves, and are invariably closely related to Khotan (Peng Jie, 2007: 66). Therefore, scholars generally believe that this style of image of the gods holding up the donors originated in from Khotan.

Some scholars have attributed the style of the earth gods holding up the donors of the royal family of Kucha to the people's belief in the Golden Light Sutra at that time. Much of the Golden Light Sutra tells that if people believe in this sutra, the earth god will bless the country and especially blessing the king's rule (Matsumoto Ichirō, 2003: 36-43; Jia Yingyi and Qi Xiaoshan, 2002: 208). Other scholars believe that the style of the earth gods holding up the donors is related to the legend of the founding of Khotan. According to this legend, the belief in the King of Vishnu, for legend has it that the successor to Khotan was born from the forehead of the King of Vishnu, and the earth gods then sprang up from the ground to nurture the Khotanese heirs (Liang Tao and Peng Jie, 2009: 118). Both views suggest that this combination of images is associated with the idea of kingship. This further confirms that the worshippers in the Kucha caves upheld by the earth gods, are the Kucha kings, and that they are all depicted in a fixed and uniform "standing on their toes" posture.

This unique standing posture is rarely used to depict other people in the Kucha Grottoes. In Cave 205 and Cave 17 of the Kizil Grottoes, for example, there are sometimes painted monks in front of the king and noblemen, forming a group of portraits. However, the standing posture of the king's servants is completely different from that of the others, indicating that this standing posture is unique to the Kucha royal family. Therefore, the question arises as to why this unique standing posture of the Kucha royal family distinguishes them from others?

The relationship between royal Donors of Kucha and the art of Iran and Central Asia

The unique "standing on tiptoe" style of the Kucha Grottoes mural depicts a donor that is not found in the painting and sculpture of Dunhuang or other regions of China. The available excavations and archaeological data indicate that such a group of figures standing side by side, with the feet of two adjacent figures overlapping, is not seen in Gandhara reliefs, Parthian art, or Near Eastern art of the Parthian period. However, is frequently seen in painting and sculpture from Iran to Central Asia between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD. The pictorial pattern influenced by Iranian Sassanid and Central Asian Sogdian art is evident.

Among the Sasanian rock reliefs of the 3rd century A.D. is a well-preserved relief portrait of either Ardashīr I (224-241A.D.) or Shāpūr I (241-272A.D., 241-272A.D.) (Georgina Herrmann, 1969: 63-88) celebrating Shāpūr I's victory at Dārābgird (Fig.7). The row of people located behind the king stand with their feet in a similar stance and overlap to the way the feet of the royal Donors of the Kucha caves stand. The king on horseback is also shown with his toes drooping, marking the earliest known portrait of a royal nobleman standing on his toes with the feet of two adjacent persons overlapping.



Fig.7 Rock reliefs of celebrating Shāpūr I's victory at Dārābgird

In a Buddhist temple called Fayaz-tepe in Termez, Uzbekistan, there is a fresco on the northwest wall of the temple (Fig.8), depicting 10 men, although only the lower half of these figures has been preserved. The central figure faces the viewer with his feet open shoulder-width apart and his toes pointing outward. The individuals on the left and right (4 on the left and 5 on the right) stand side by side with the central figure, but they all face the central figure with 3/4 of their sides respectively (Ciro Lo Muzio, 2008: 193, fig.5). The most notable feature of this group is that all their toes point outward and overlap, giving the impression that each person is stepping on the foot of the person next to him (Al'baum, 1990: 25).



Fig.8 Line drawings of the King and his attendants on the north-west wall of the Buddhist temple in the centre of Fayaz Tepe (From Al'baum 1990a, fig.3.)

There is another Buddhist temple, Kara-tepee, just 1 kilometer away from Fayaz-tepe. It has a similar group of side-by-side standing figures painted on its south wall, but unfortunately only the feet and the edges of their clothes have been preserved (Fig.9)(Staviskij, 1998: 30, fig. 11). We can see the overlapping left and right feet of the adjacent pair in the same style as the Fayaz-tepe fresco. A similar image can be seen in the frescoes in the north chapel of the ancient monastery of Panjikent II, dating from the end of the 5th century (Guitty Azarpay, 1981: 56, fig. 23).

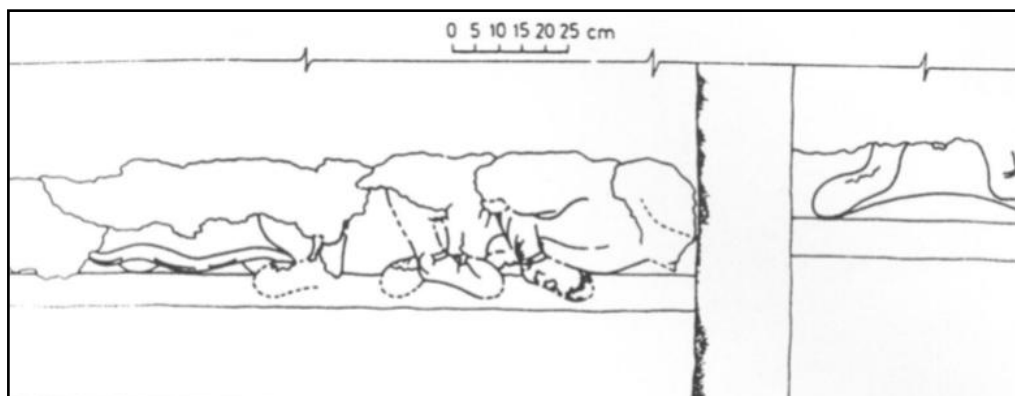


Fig. 9: Line drawings of male donors' figures on the wall of the Buddhist temple in Kara Tepe (From Staviskij 1998, fig. 11.)

In northern Afghanistan, near Balkh, there is a religious site called Dilberjin. In the northeast corner of this site, a house was excavated revealing a group of men depicted in wall paintings on the lower level. They are standing in front of each other, wearing costumes and accessories similar to those of the royal donors of Xinjiang (Fig.10). The most significant feature is that all of them are depicted with their feet in a toe-standing position with the left and right feet of two adjacent figures overlapping.



Fig. 10: Wall painting in Room 16 at the site of Delbazin, Afghanistan (From Kruglikova Irina. *Greco-kushan de Dilberdjin en Bactriane. Comptes rendus de l'academie des inscriptions, seance du 17 Juin 1977, p.425.*)

B.A. Livinsky and Zhang Guangda date the Dilberjin paintings to the 5th to early 6th century and suggest a connection between the Dilberjin frescoes and the Kucha frescoes (B.A.Livinsky, Zhang Guangda and R. Shabani Samghabadi, 1996: 151-152). This group of portraits is also related to the figures in the Bamiyan Caves, the Balalyk-tepee of Tokharistan, and the Kucha Cave frescoes in terms of shape and costume.

In summary, the pose of the Kucha royal donor standing on his toes and a group of people standing side by side with their feet overlapping were shown in the statues of the Sasanian kings of Iran as late as the 3rd century A.D. This style was frequently used in monastery frescoes in Central Asia during the Kushan or Sassanid Kushan period. The style of clothes worn by the Kucha royal donors is commonly found in the Sogdian murals of the areas of Panjikent and Samarkand. All of these examples fully illustrate the relationship between the frescoes of the Kucha royal donors and the art of these regions.

The relationship between Kucha and Iran was also recorded in Chinese literature. The Old Book of Tang (《旧唐书》) records:

The men and women from Kucha all shoulder had-length hair but the kings did not cut their hairs. They learned foreign culture, Sanskrit language and Mathematics and placing a special importance on Buddhism (Liu Xu, 1975: 5303).

The Report of the regions west of Great Tang (《大唐西域记》) also mentioned: “The king of Kucha wore silk around his neck, a silk robe on his body and gems on his waist belt, while sitting on a bed adorned with a golden lion”. (Xuang Zang, 2017: 16) It evident that from these historical records that the ancient state of Kucha had more strict regulations regarding the king’s attire and ceremonies, emphasizing and highlighting the unique characteristics of its kingship.

The tradition of haircutting was not exclusive to the people of Kucha but also to Iran. Some ancient Chinese documents also recorded that Iranian males cut their hair in similar manner. looking at the ethnographic factors in the Kucha region (Sven Hedin, 1940: 131). The ancient Tarim Basin was originally inhabited by Iranians. Moreover, the distribution of Iranians used to extend widely to the northern part of the Tarim Basin (Hasegai Ryōteki, 1999: 43-44).

There is also a significant amount of literature and archaeological data showing that China had close relations with the Persian Sasanian Empire from the Northern Wei to the early Tang Dynasty. According to The Book of Wei (《魏书》), the Sasanian sent emissaries to the Northern Wei 10 times during the Northern Wei period, and a total of 29 times during the Tang Dynasty when emissaries were exchanged between Sasanian and China Tang. These historical events indicate the close interaction between China and the Iranian Sasanian kingdom between the 6th and 7th centuries, as well as the historical context and possibility of Iranian artistic influence on the portraits of the Kucha royal donors.

The Form and Significance of the Grottoes of Kucha’s Royal Donor Figures

However, comparing similar images and the describing of the historical context in which they were created cannot be seen as the direct reason of the iconography pattern of the Kucha royal figures. A more specific analysis of the images is necessary. The study of the donors’ portraits in cave paintings typically focuses two main issues: first, their identity mainly determined by inscriptions; and second, their costumes and facial features are analyzed through comparisons with similar costumes from the same period. When observing these figures in the Grottoes, it is challenging to identify the donors’ identities without their inscriptions.

The toe-standing figures from Iran, Central Asia, and Kucha cited above do not belong to the same era, nor are they the same type or identity of ethnic group, yet they share similar dress and standing postures. This indicates that the same image motif or pictorial structure is not always used to represent a fixed theme, and that the transmission and interaction of images should have their own logic.

If we closely examine at the facial features of the Kucha royal donors, we notice that

each one shares identical features. Without considering their attire and focusing solely on their faces, it becomes nearly impossible to differentiate between them, making it challenging to determine their gender. Initially, Grunwedel points out the schematic nature of the figures, and how the ancient painters ‘copied’ them in a ‘translucent’ manner altering only the objects held in their hands or the gestures of their arms to convey distinction. It should also be mentioned that the German expedition in Xinjiang discovered several white drawings on paper in Kucha Caves, which were analyzed and found to be adaptable for creating various portraits by combining them differently. Additionally, some of the Brahmic alphabet symbols displayed on the walls of the Kizil Caves have been identified as cue marks used by painters for coloring or outlining (Wang Zheng, 2001: 35-39).

According to the German sinologist Lothar Ledderose, the creation of ancient Chinese art was fundamentally characterized by ‘modularity’ and ‘scale’. The conclusion is based on the author’s detailed examination of the production processes of ancient Chinese objects, writings, paintings and architectures. He said, “different parts can be prefabricated in large quantities and can be quickly assembled together in different combinations, thus creating infinitely variable units from a limited number of standing components”. (Lothar Ledderose, 2005: 4)

The small number of inscriptions preserved in the Kucha Caves on the donor’s figures indicate that these Kucha kings were real people, and it is highly likely that the painters had met them. The painter’s depiction of the costumes, ornaments, and body structures of these supporters has reached a level of detail that suggests that the painter was perfectly capable of reproducing the portraits of the figures. However, the painter chose to abandon the depiction of their personalities and instead adopted a schematic approach to their representation. This phenomenon is either a result of the painter’s ‘tradition’ of painting, or the influence of the prevailing social or aesthetic attitudes of the time.

Conclusion

By tracing the origin of the images depicting the standing posture of the Kucha royal family, we find that the “tiptoe” posture of the Kucha royal family from “old system” drew inspiration from the artistic traditions of Iran and Central Asia, then “adapted” in the Kucha region. The way the feet of the figures are drawn is not realistic, but rather stylized, creating a perfect visual pattern that transcends ordinary reality, presenting all the Kucha kings in an “idealized” manner.

Although all the figures are shown standing facing each other, or at a three quarters angle with their heads slightly turned, there is no narrative connecting them; they simply “stand” there in a mechanical manner. The artist’s goal is to incorporate all the elements that symbolize a “king” or a “saint” in the portraits of the Kucha royal supporters, showcasing in this way their elevated status and position distinct from those ordinary

individuals, without focusing on their personal characteristics. The artistic elements borrowed from Iran and Central Asia that convey the posture of “kings” and “saints” which are assimilated by the painters as the foundation for depicting of the royal family figures of Kucha.

Observation of the position of these donors in the cave reveals that the vast majority are painted on either side of the main Buddha statue on the walls to the left and right of the central pillar of the cave’s main chamber. The royal family and the guiding monks, along with the Buddha statue, form a procession of worshipers, creating a space for worship of the Buddha. The canals 甬道 to the left and right of the central pillar are connected to the back half of the cave and together form a passage that can be surround around the central pillar, a passage that is also central to the composition of the ritual space of this grotto. These groups of donors “appear” in the caves both as the members of the kings and as ritualists and believers touring the caves. This dual “presence” fulfills the need for the royal family to worship the Buddha while also becoming an object of view for other visitors. The large-scale bodies, gorgeous costumes, and neat and tidy standing postures of the Kucha royal donors became the most enthusiastic elements used by the painters to express the dignity and majesty of the donors. This patterned way of figure was a standard pattern agreed upon by both the donors and the painters of the time, specifically to highlight the special status and position of the kings and nobles. This form of representation undoubtedly reflects the image of kings in the minds of artists and viewers of that era, as well as their common viewing habits and aesthetic standards. This visual representation is designed for a specific liturgical context, with groups of worshipers depicted as real people in the places where the service takes place. If we consider the caves as a thousand-year-old Buddhist monument, then with their permanent preservation, the caves have also become monuments to their families. In the visual custom of that time, the common understanding of the image of the Kucha royal donors by the artist and the viewer is reflected in a patterned visual imagery of kingship, hierarchy, and sanctity. Here, the images of the Kucha royal donors and other secular figures together confirm this hierarchy of domination. In contrast to the image of the monks in the same depiction, the donor’ figure emphasizes the majesty of the Kucha royal family and, moreover, the most fundamental of all kingly virtues, piety.

Conflict of Interest

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چگونگی نگاره‌پردازی پیشکش‌آورندگان شاهی در غارهای کوچا (مطالعه موردی: چگونگی ایستادن پیشکش‌دهندگان بر روی پنجه پا)

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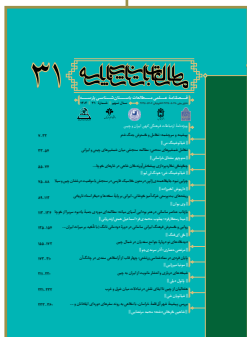
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چکیده

نگارهای موجود در غارهای نامی به «غارهای کوچا» در «شین جیانگ» کشور چین واقع است؛ این نگاره‌ها به‌عنوان صحنه «حامیان پادشاهی» خوانده می‌شود و تاریخ آنان به سده‌های ۶-۷ م. مربوط است. این نگاره بازتابی از شیوه خاص در پردازش ظاهری و سبک متفاوت ایستادن یعنی «ایستادن بر روی پنجه‌های پا» را نشان می‌دهد؛ نگاره‌ای با شماری از افراد که در کنار هم دیگر، اما بر روی پنجه‌های پای دیگری ایستاده‌اند. این پژوهش به چگونگی پیوند این حالت ایستادن و پیوند آن با هنر ایران و آسیای میانه می‌پردازد. هنر ایرانی و آسیای میانه به شکل مختلف با برپایی هویت شاه‌گرایانه، آئین‌های دینی و مفاهیم زیبایی‌شناختی مردم کوچا درهم‌تنیده است.

کلیدواژگان: چهره بانیان، تصویر نوک پنجه (یا تصویر ایستاده بر پنجه)، ایران، آسیای مرکزی، آئین.



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مقدمه

غارهای «قیزیل» در «سین‌کیانگ» در بردارنده نگاره‌های بسیاری از پیشکش‌آوردندگان کوچا مربوط به سده ششم تا هفتم میلادی را پاس داشته است. این نگاره‌ها بیشتر در دو سوی درب ورودی اتاق اصلی یا روی دیوارهای اندرونی و بیرونی تاقچه‌های چپ و راست نقاشی شده‌اند. نگاره‌های این افراد با قد بلند، لباس و ظاهر متمایز و حالت پاهای آن‌ها به شکلی کاملاً رسمی نگاریده شده است: چکمه‌های نوک‌تیز، درحالی‌که پای چپ یکی بر روی پای (راست) دیگری و پای آن یکی بر روی پای کناری نقش شده‌اند. پیش‌تر و در مورد لباس، هویت یا موقعیت این نگارها، بحث‌های زیادی صورت گرفته است. این پژوهش بر چگونگی پیوند میان حالت ایستادن در نگاره‌های غارهای کوچا و ساخت هویت خاندان سلطنتی تمرکز می‌کند؛ افزون‌تر، پژوهش به پیشینه چنین نگارگری، هدف و نیت نگارگران اصلی از این حالت را نیز بررسی خواهد کرد؛ بنابراین پژوهش بیشتر بر پیوند «حالت» و «مفهوم» تمرکز دارد.

چگونگی ایستادن پیشکش‌آوردگان شاهی، شیوه‌ای یکتا

بسیاری از غارهای قیزیل در سین‌کیانگ، چهره‌های ایستاده پیشکش‌آوردگان زن و مرد را در دو سوی درب ورودی اتاق اصلی یا روی دیوارهای داخلی و خارجی تاقچه‌های چپ و راست را به نگارش آورده که قدمت آن‌ها به سده‌های ششم تا هفتم میلادی برمی‌گردد.

نگاره‌های نخستین پیشکش‌آوردگان از دید گاهنگاری، بیشتر در دو سوی در دیوار جلوی اتاق اصلی نقاشی شده‌اند؛ اهداکنندگان رده بالاتر چون پادشاهان، شهبانوان و شاهزادگان در حالت ایستاده و آن‌هایی که در رتبه پایین‌تر قرار دارند، در حالت ایستاده با حالت خاص پنجه پا نگاریده شده‌اند. با سده ششم میلادی، وضعیت شرکت‌کنندگان، به ویژه بر روی دیوارهای داخلی تاقچه‌های دو سوی اتاق اصلی، یعنی در دو طرف پیکره اصلی، افزایش می‌یابد؛ اگر به تمام پیکره‌های ایستاده پرستش‌کنندگان، که حفظ شده، نگاهی بیندازیم، متوجه خواهیم شد که همگی تقریباً دارای لباس یکپارچه و همه در حالت خاص بر روی پنجه ایستاده‌اند؛ سبکی که «گلونویددل» آن را «پیکره‌های طرح‌دار» نامیده است.

در سمت چپ کتیبه‌های برهمنی، نگاره دو پرستار، یعنی پادشاه و شهبانوی کوچا دیده می‌شود؛ این دو نیز در همان حالت «ایستادن بر روی پنجه‌های پا» نگاریده شده‌اند. گروهی دیگر متشکل از چهار پیکره پیشکش‌آورنده، دو گروه دیگر، شامل سه نفر (دو مرد و یک زن) و گروه دوم سه نفر نیز در حالت ایستادن بر روی انگشتان پا (پنجه‌ها) درحالی‌که پای هر یک روی پای دیگری قرار دارد. شماری دیگر شامل هفت نفر در دیوار داخلی نیز در همین حالت بر روی پنجه نگاریده شده‌اند؛ اما پرسش اینجا است که، چرا این شمار افراد بر روی سر پنجه خود به نگارش درآمده‌اند؟ بر پایه سنگ‌نوشته‌ها، بیشتر این کسان به دودمان شاهی کوچا وابستگی دارند.

پیوند میان نگاره‌های پیشکش‌آوران در غارهای کوچا با ایران و آسیای میانه

حالت منحصر به فرد «گذاشتن پنجه بر روی پنجه فرد کناری» دیوارنگاره‌های غارهای کوچا، بازتاب اهداکننده‌ای است که در نقاشی و مجسمه دون‌هوانگ یا دیگر کرانه‌های چین نمی‌توان یافت. داده‌های باستان‌شناسی نشان می‌دهد که نگاره چنین گروهی از افراد که چفت هم ایستاده، و سر پنجه پای هر یک روی پای دیگری قرار دارد، در نقش برجسته‌های گندرا، هنر اشکانی و هنر خاورمیانه از دوره اشکانی دیده نمی‌شود؛ اما در نقاشی و مجسمه‌سازی ایران تا به آسیای میانه از سده سوم تا به هفتم میلادی از راه هنر ساسانی و سغدیان آسیای میانه‌نشین قابل فهم است. از میان نگار برجسته‌های صخره‌ای ساسانی به سده سوم میلادی، می‌توان به نقش برجسته‌های

اردشیر اول (۲۲۴-۲۴۱ م.) و شاپور اول (۲۴۱-۲۷۲ م.)، به‌ویژه نگارهٔ پیروزی شاپور بر امپراتور رومی در دارابگرد اشاره کرد. آن شمار از همراهان شاه که در پشت سر وی قرار دارند دارای حالت پاهای همانند با حالت پای پیشکش آورندگان سلطنتی غارهای کوچا هستند.

در پرستشگاهی بودایی به نام «فیاض تپه» در «ترمز»، ازبکستان، یک نقاشی دیواری بر روی دیوار شمال غربی معبد باقی مانده است؛ این نگاره، ۱۰ مرد را نشان می‌دهد. از بارزترین ویژگی نگاره این است که انگشتان پنجهٔ پای هر یک بر روی پنجهٔ پای کناری است.

معبد بودایی دیگری به نام «قره تپه» در فاصلهٔ یک کیلومتری فیاض تپه وجود دارد که گروهی مشابه از نگاره‌های ایستاده کنار هم روی دیوار جنوبی آن نقاشی شده‌اند. افزون بر این، نگاره همسانی در نقاشی‌های دیواری پرستشگاه شمالی از صومعهٔ باستانی «پنجکند دو»، سدهٔ پنجم میلادی، می‌توان ارجاع داد.

در شمال افغانستان و در نزدیکی بلخ، مکان مذهبی به نام «دلبرجین» (دلبرجان؛ م.) وجود دارد. از بارزترین ویژگی این نقاشی موجود، وجود سرپنجه‌هایی افراد دو به دو بر روی پای هم‌دیگر است. «لوینسکی» و «ژانگ گوانگدا» تاریخ نقاشی‌های دلبرجین را به سدهٔ پنجم تا آغاز سدهٔ ششم می‌دانند. گزارش‌هایی از پیوندهای میان کوچا و ایران در منابع چینی ثبت شده است؛ از این شمار باید به کتاب تانگ نامه قدیم اشاره کرد.

هم‌چنین مدارک بسیاری از متن‌شناسی تا به داده‌های باستان‌شناسی وجود دارد که نشان می‌دهد چین از «وی شمالی» (Northern Wei) تا آغاز دودمان «تانگ» پیوند نزدیکی با ایرانیان ساسانی داشته است. بنابر گزارش کتاب تاریخ وی، ساسانیان ۱۰ بار در دورهٔ وی شمالی و در مجموع ۲۹ بار در زمان دودمان تانگ ساسانیان و شاهان تانگ چین به مبادلهٔ سفیر پرداختند. این منابع به پیوندهای ایران و چین بیشتر به سدهٔ ششم تا هفتم میلادی، به‌ویژه ساسانیان ایران و تانگ چین می‌پردازد؛ از این روی، امکان نفوذ فرهنگ و هنر ایران بر نگاره‌های کوچا قابل فهم است. در مورد نگاره‌های نگاریده شده بر روی پنجهٔ پا از ایران، تا به آسیای میانه و کوچا که در بالا به آن‌ها اشاره شد، نمی‌توان گفت که دقیقاً متعلق به کدام دوره و به کدام گروه قومی وابسته است؛ اما آن‌چه آشکار است که این گروه‌ها در پوشش و وضعیت ایستادن همانند نگاریده شده‌اند. اگر به حالت و ویژگی سیمای اهداکنندگان شاهانهٔ کوچا دقت کنیم، متوجه می‌شویم که هرکدام از آن‌ها از طرح سیمای یکسانی برخوردارند؛ اگر قرار بود تنها سیمای آن‌ها اساس باشد، تشخیص آن‌ها از یک‌دیگر و حتی تعیین جنسیت آن‌ها ناممکن می‌شد؛ با وجود این، نوع پوشش آن‌هاست که بدین تشخیص یاری داده است.

نتیجه‌گیری

با بررسی سرچشمهٔ نگارهٔ حالت ایستادهٔ دودمان شاهی کوچا، یعنی ایستادن بر روی «نوک/پنجهٔ پا دیگری» به یک «آئین کهنیک» می‌رسیم که از سنت‌های نگارگری ایران و آسیای میانه برگرفته شده است؛ این سنت در کران جغرافیایی کوچا «باز طراحی» شده است. نگاره حالت پاهای هرچند واقعیت‌گرایانه نیست، اما چنان ساختارمند طراحی شده، که همهٔ پادشاهان کوچا با شیوه‌ای بسیار فاخر به «پیدایی/نگاریده» می‌آیند و این می‌تواند برگرفته از یک الگوی کامل باشد.

ویژگی‌های هنری ایران و آسیای میانه که بیانگر حالت «پادشاهان» و «قدیس‌ها» است، به عنوان خمیرمایه‌ای برای نگاریدن شخصیت‌های خاندان سلطنتی کوچا، بسیار مورد توجه نگارگران بوده است. مشاهدهٔ موقعیت این اهداکنندگان در غار نشان می‌دهد که بیشتر آن‌ها در دو سوی پیکرهٔ اصلی بودا، یعنی روی دیوارهای سمت چپ و راست ستون مرکزی اتاق اصلی غار نقاشی شده‌اند. دودمان شاهی و راهبان راهنما، همراه با پیکره بودا، با هم صفی از پرستاران را تشکیل می‌دهند

و فضایی (دینی) را برای پرستش بودا ایجاد می‌کنند. راهروهای سمت چپ و راست ستون مرکزی به نیمه پشتی غار پیوست می‌شوند و با هم گذرگاهی را تشکیل می‌دهند که می‌توان اطراف ستون مرکزی را احاطه کرد، گذرگاهی که در ترکیب فضای آئینی این غار نیز مرکزی است. این گروه از اهداکنندگان نگاریده شده در غارها، شامل اعضای دودمان شاهی و هم‌مجریان مراسم مذهبی و باورمندان می‌شود. این «حضور» دوگانه (شاه و مذهبیون) بر نیاز خانواده شاهی به پرستش بودا را بازتاب می‌دهد. نگارش پیکرهای به شکل بزرگ، با لباس‌های باشکوه و حالت‌های ایستاده منظم و مرتب اهداکنندگان سلطنتی کوچا، پرشورترین عناصر مورد استفاده نقاشان برای بیان وقار و شکوه اهداکنندگان است. این شیوه طراحی الگوی مورد علاقه نگارگران بود که هم «شکوه» (شاهانه) و هم باور (دینی) را به نمایش گذاشته‌اند.