

Tracing Back to the Aesthetic Origin of Stone Animal Modeling in the Tombs of the Xiao Liang Period in the Southern Dynasty

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Abstract: The eastward spread of Buddhism introduced the lion shape as a Buddhist dharma protector into the mainland. With the localization development of the stone lion shape, it had a great impact on the stone animal shape in the stone carvings of the tombs of the Liang Dynasty. The "marriage" of the two styles of Buddhist ideal and imperial mausoleum program created the brilliance of the stone carvings of Liang mausoleum and cast a permanent monument in the history of Chinese sculpture.

Keywords: Liang Dynasty; Tomb Stone Carvings; Lion

1. Introduction

The Liang Dynasty was the most active era of literary thought in ancient China, and it was also a key period for the formation and development of the mausoleum system in feudal society. It successfully opened a new era of building large-scale tomb stone carvings in ancient China and made a great contribution to the formation and improvement of ancient Chinese mausoleum system. The stone carvings on the tombs of the Liang Dynasty not only reflect the aesthetic orientation of the society at that time, but also reflect the spiritual beliefs of the people in the Xiao Liang period.

2. Characteristics of lion modeling in Liang Dynasty

In addition to the characteristics of Chinese traditional art, there are also traces of foreign civilization. This shows that foreign art did exert an influence on the stone carving art of the tomb path in the Liang Dynasty. Comparing the characteristics of stone animals in the tombs before and after the Liang Dynasty, it is not difficult to find that the biggest difference between the stone animals in the tombs of the Liang Dynasty represented by Xiao Jing's tomb and the stone carvings in other periods is the long tongue of the stone animals. There are many Stone Beasts carved in Chinese dynasties with their mouths open, and a few with their tongues sticking out. Although it cannot be said that there is no, the shape of long tongue and chest like the stone beast in the tomb path of the Liang Dynasty is indeed very rare. The ancients of China stressed that the tongue is the "spiritual root", which should be contained rather than exposed. It is the so-called "contained but not exposed". The shape of the tongue spitting beast in Xiaojing tombstone is obviously not in line with the habits of the Chinese nation. This sudden change has to be suspected of being influenced by alien culture. The stone beasts before the Southern Dynasty did not spit out their tongue, and the stone lions in the tombs after the Sui and Tang Dynasties did not spit out their tongue. It is not difficult to see the clue from the later generations to revise the phenomenon of Stone Beasts spitting out their tongue in the Southern Dynasty. This small change also seems to remind us that the image of lion beast in Xiaojing tomb path is likely to have been nourished by foreign civilization ^[1].

3. The image of lion in Chinese ancient books

As we all know, there are no wild lions in China. There are no records of wild lions in ancient books. In the process of archaeological excavation in ancient times, there are no reports of lion bone fossils. Obviously, the lion shape in the stone carvings of Chinese tombs in the Eastern Han and Six Dynasties originated from abroad. The lion, a cat native to Africa or

West Asia, is a genuine import to China. Historical records also confirm this inference. According to the biography of ban Chao in the book of Han Dynasty, "at the age of, the Yue family offered treasures, Fuba and lions for the sake of Princess Han." it was from the Han Dynasty that there began to be lions in China. Rare things are precious. As a rare alien species, lions are treated with courtesy in Central China, and people regard them as sacred animals at that time. It is recorded in the Liang Hui Yao of the Southern Dynasty that "in the state of Hua, envoys were sent to offer master Huang, white sable fur, Persian brocade and other things." this is the direct evidence that the local land of the Liang Dynasty also had lions. The tribute from foreign countries made the lion, a special foreign body, enter the Chinese court, making it possible for the local stone animals to carve and model the image of the lion. However, the lion image is really valued and recognized, but also thanks to the eastern spread of Buddhism and the rulers' admiration for Buddhist culture. [2]

4. The lion style brought by Buddhism spread eastward

Buddhism was gradually accepted by Chinese people after it was introduced into China in the Eastern Han Dynasty. In the Liang Dynasty, Buddhist thought had been widely worshipped by the upper class. Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty believed in Buddhism and was infatuated with it. Therefore, things related to Buddhism were often favored by many emperors at that time. People who understand Buddhism are well aware that the lion is the divine beast of Buddhist dharma protection. The Buddha is respected as the "lion among people", and the Buddha's saying is also called "lion roar". Coupled with the lion's inherent momentum, it is not difficult to imagine that the rulers of the Liang Dynasty must love it. This can be seen from the fact that some royal daily necessities at that time often used lion skin products or lion images as decoration. For example, in the book of Liang, it is mentioned that "Shizi brocade", and Emperor Wu of Liang sits in the "Leo" to preach. There are numerous examples of this kind, which shows that the royal families of Xiao Liang dynasties loved lions. Since the lion was so popular in the upper class at that time, it is well understood that its image was introduced into the decoration of the imperial mausoleum. The stone beast in the tomb passage is originally a guardian and deterrent. As a Dharma protector, the lion not only has the ability to guard, but also has the protection of Buddhism.

5. The influence of Persian civilization

It should be pointed out that although the academic circles generally agree that the image of the lion beast in the tomb of the Liang Dynasty is indeed influenced by the shape of the lion from the west, this does not mean that the lion image in Buddhism is its only source of reference. In fact, the carved shape of winged lion in Persian Zoroastrianism is also likely to affect the image generation of lion beast in Xiaojing tomb. Moreover, early Indian sculpture also borrowed many elements of Persian Zoroastrian sculpture. On the sculpture of the north gate of sangqi tower, the winged lion of the Persian Achaemenid Dynasty was misappropriated. But it seems to me that although both the Persian winged lion and the Xiaojing tombstone beast have wings, we can't simply conclude that there must be an inheritance relationship between them. Comparing their images, we can still find many differences in their modeling styles. Persian winged lion carving pays attention to the true reproduction of the natural attributes and physiological structure of the lion, which is clearly the expression of the realistic system of ancient Greece.

6. Summary

On the whole, the shape of stone animals in the tombs of the Liang Dynasty mainly inherited the image of Chinese traditional stone animal carving. It is only a simple reference for the lion image in Buddhist art and the wing lion shape in Zoroastrianism. Its core expression and main presentation are still not separated from the category of Chinese Aesthetics.

References

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