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Study on the Aesthetic Imagery of Bronze Lamps in the Han Dynasty in China

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Abstract: The Han Dynasty existed in Chinese history for more than 400 years, reaching unprecedented heights in politics, economy, and culture. This article is aimed at the animal lamps with special shapes in the bronze lamps of the Han Dynasty in my country and researches the aesthetic image characteristics of works of art. The main research content of this article is the selectivity, subjectivity, and originality in aesthetic imagery, combined with the detailed analysis of the bronze lamps preserved in the Han Dynasty, to explore the content of aesthetic imagery in the shape and function of ancient bronze lamps, hoping to play a role for future researchers—a certain reference.

Keywords: Aesthetic Image; Feature; Animal Shape; Bronze Lamp.

1. Introduction

Ancient humans discovered fire, and with time and technological progress, they continued to evolve and eventually formed special lighting utensils. As a product created by human beings, lamps are one of the indispensable tools for human beings. Until now, people have been unable to live in an environment without light for a long time, which shows the importance of lamps.

The lamps and lanterns in the Han Dynasty are an art that reflects social life and expresses the artist's thoughts and emotions by shaping visual images. With the demise of the former dynasty, the etiquette system continued to disintegrate, and the bronze utensils gradually decreased in practicality. However, this did not affect the important historical status of bronze lamps in the Han Dynasty regarding artistic language, cultural connotation, and aesthetics. The lamps and lanterns of the Han Dynasty were inherited and innovated based on the lamps and lanterns of the Warring States Period and the Qin Dynasty. The funeral concept of "death is like life, things are as wide as existence", and the bronze lamp reflects the aesthetic characteristics of the times. The artisans at that time unified the concrete shape and abstract design thinking and realized the cooperation of lamps and lanterns in artistry and practicality. It can be seen from many cultural relics that the bronze lamps are exquisite in materials, ingenious in design, and exquisite in beauty. The artisans have super high creativity and executive power. Through hardworking hands and extraordinary wisdom, while constantly seeking their development, they have a sense of beauty and create beauty in production, showing beauty to people., Achieved the pinnacle in the history of ancient lamps and lanterns in my country.

In this article, the author collects and conducts in-depth research on pictures, texts, and materials of bronze lamps and lanterns in the Han Dynasty through modern Internet technology. Compared with lamps in the same period, bronze animal-shaped lamps are very distinctive. After consulting relevant literature in CNKI, the number of studies is very small. Therefore, the author believes there needs to be more research in the bronze animal lamps in the Han Dynasty, and it is necessary and urgent to study the content of aesthetic consciousness.

2. Selective Aesthetic Imagery

The imagery in the artwork first acts on the recipient's feelings and imagination and then arouses (and conveys) the aesthetic emotion and the aesthetic emotion produced by the recipient stimulates his imagination, thus presenting in his heart an image that is consistent with the creative subject's heart. The image generally corresponds to a piece of artistic conception. [1] Facing people with different aesthetic emotions, they will produce different aesthetic images when appreciating artworks, so the aesthetic cognition of things is also accompanied by selectivity. When artisans made bronze lamps, they established an aesthetic link between them and the appreciators. Generating aesthetic images requires people to have a certain aesthetic awareness of things, and to stimulate people's aesthetic awareness, so selectivity is very important.

According to the different forms and structures, the bronze lamps and lanterns of the Han Dynasty can be divided into figurine lamps, object-shaped lamps, branch lamps, and animal-shaped lamps. Among them, the theme of animals is the most special. Although the number of unearthed lamps is small, they are exquisite. At that time, the shape of lamps and lanterns in the Han Dynasty was always determined around the aesthetic needs of the ruling class, such as princes, generals, and local officials, because they had the opportunity to receive a good education, their vision and aesthetics were higher than ordinary people. Their overall aesthetic level was higher than that of ordinary people. Therefore, under the influence of their aesthetics, artisans organically combined image thinking with abstract thinking and began to imitate the appearance of animals with more complex shapes. This situation can be found in the unearthed cultural relics. Most of the lamps are auspicious birds and animals, such as cows, snakes, geese, sheep, deer, etc. These animals were the animal prototypes most chosen by artisans at that time. Excellent works of art are inseparable from artisans' careful observation of animals. Their simplification and innovation of prototypes are based on their aesthetic tendencies and combined with their aesthetics throughout the entire creation.

Almost all the animals chosen by artisans have symbolic meanings resulting from subjectivity. For example, the Han Dynasty gilt bronze deer lamp unearthed from the tomb of Liu

Fei is shown in Figure 1. It is currently the only lamp designed in the shape of an elk among the many unearthed cultural relics from the Han Dynasty. The deer is half-squatting, with its head and neck stretched upwards and elegant overall posture. "Twisting" tree vines support the lamp panel, and the whole body is made of gilt technology; the overall shape is lifelike and highly decorative. In designing bronze lamps, artisans combine aesthetics and functions, and specific modeling symbols are transformed into different aesthetic images under people's observation, which means that artworks and artistic images are integrated, giving lamps a new vitality.



Fig 1. Gilt Bronze Deer Lamp of the Han Dynasty

3. Subjectivity of Aesthetic Imagery

The animal shapes of the bronze lamps and lanterns of the Han Dynasty have distinct characteristics of the times. When appreciating the differences due to individual subjectivity, there will be different aesthetic images will also be produced. It is not difficult to see from the many animal bronze lamps in the Han Dynasty that the overall aesthetic image is mostly elegant, light, and agile. There is a great contrast with the thick, dignified, and complicated decorations of bronze utensils in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties. The aesthetic image of these works of art is very in line with the aesthetic preferences of rulers with high power and status. experience. The shape design of artwork directly affects the aesthetic image in people's consciousness. Excellent artwork is worthy of careful taste and can continuously sublimate the aesthetic consciousness of the appraiser. A bronze lamp in the shape of a crane with a turtle seat was unearthed in the Han Dynasty. The crane stands on the back of the turtle. I was watching something intently. as shown in picture 2. Its posture is opposite to that of the crane, and the overall shape of the lamp presents a static and dynamic state. Compared with the shape of a single animal, the combined design is more aesthetically pleasing, and the overall image is more vivid—the role of lamp balance. As an aesthetic person, we can feel the design charm of bronze lamps. The work blends the crane's elegance and the tortoise's clear image. The aesthetic imagery is sublimated in the communication with the work. Finally, the aesthetic person enters the art world and communicates with every detail in the work of art carefully designed by the craftsman. Communicate and constantly form aesthetic images. The aesthetic image here is neither a concept nor an idea; it is in the sensibility. Let the appreciators realize that in aesthetic activities, whether the aesthetic object can enter the subjective world of the appraiser to form an aesthetic image or whether the quality of the aesthetic image is good or bad, to some extent, is determined by the aesthetic view of the appraiser. [2] The aesthetic image has a distinct subject consciousness of the aesthetic. Aesthetes can be integrated into aesthetic activities, and whether the aesthetic object can enter the subjective world of the aesthetes to finally form an aesthetic image or the quality of the aesthetic image is determined to some extent by the aesthetics of the aesthetes, so that in the creation of subjective initiative, the aesthetic image under the influence of subjective aesthetic consciousness can be felt through specific lamps. For example: in the tiger bronze lamp of the Han Dynasty, the overall posture of the tiger is quite dynamic, relatively restrained, and unassuming, as shown in Figure 3. The head is drooping, and the limbs are slightly gathered. The shape is quite different from the original shape of the animal. The king of the forest is usually majestic and majestic, bowing his head in front of humans like a captive pet at home. At the same time, the artisans designed the shape of the tail as a lamp holder on a whim so as not to damage the overall shape but also to support the light source. The overall style conforms to the aesthetic trend and preferences of the ruling class.

In addition to the unique shape, there is also the design of the tiger surface decoration, which gives people a sense of gorgeousness, nobility, and mystery, presenting the unique design aesthetics of the Han Dynasty. From the detailed design of the pattern and the eager yearning and pursuit of high-quality and exquisite life requirements, the pattern has a strong decorative color, which will produce different aesthetic intentions in the eyes of many aestheticians. Some people see gorgeousness, while others see nobility. Due to different personal senses, there are great differences in feelings. The reason is that because of the aestheticians' different aesthetic angles and aesthetic views, the tiger bronze lamps in the Han Dynasty have a large difference in aesthetic intentions. Therefore, the aesthetic concept of the aesthetic person is an important reason for the subject consciousness, subjectivity, or aesthetic image itself.



Fig 2. Bronze lamp in the shape of a crane with a tortoise seat in the Han Dynasty



Fig 3. Han Dynasty Tiger Bronze Lamp

4. Originality of Aesthetic Imagery

Susan Lange reveals the inner connection between imagination or intuition and rational logic or (abstract) conceptual thinking: imagination is "the greatest conceptual ability of man" [3]. The actual aesthetic and psychological activities are more complicated. [4] "Imagination is one of the oldest mental activities that humans have. It is much earlier than the rational faculty. It is even the common source of dreams, reason, religion, and all general observations. From the above description, we can understand that imagination and innovation play a positive role in aesthetic imagery. Then, the originality of aesthetic imagery is caused by the emotional experience and imagination of the aesthetician.

From the above description, we can understand that imagination and innovation play a positive role in aesthetic imagery. As for the originality of aesthetic imagery, it is caused by the emotional experience and imagination of the aesthetician. In fact, in the aesthetic process of animal bronze lamps and lanterns in the Han Dynasty, many images are the physical appearances that the aesthetics mobilize themselves to see, purposefully choose to innovate, actively imagine, and directly change the internal subjective world situation from the external form. The form expressed, this kind of imagination is based on what can be seen and felt in real life, and the shape is externalized after imagination to form a unique aesthetic feeling. Artisans form the innovation of aesthetic imagery through their consciousness processing, which can reflect artisans' psychological feelings and emotions at that time. This kind of imagination is based on a certain aesthetic height. Aesthetic taste, and finally, use their imagination to produce it with the help of object appearance. It is written in "Zeng Guang Xian Wen" in the Ming Dynasty: Sheep have the kindness of kneeling and breastfeeding, and crows have the feeling of feeding back. Lambs kneeled to drink milk for some time after birth, but the ancients endowed it with the humanistic meaning of kneeling and thanking their mothers for their kindness. "The lamb kneeling on the breast" is thus regarded by people as a representative of filial piety to parents and gratitude for their parents' upbringing.

In fact, from a biological point of view, first of all, because the ancestors of sheep are herbivores, even in the state of feeding, they will maintain a high degree of vigilance to the surrounding environment and be ready to escape the attack of enemies at any time, so ewes Keep standing all the time, and the lamb must kneel down to eat milk, which is one of the reasons for "lamb kneeling milk". The second reason is that when the lamb is feeding, it has to hit the ewe's abdomen with its head hard so that the ewe's milk can flow out. This is the second reason that really causes the sheep to kneel down to drink milk. But the ancients simply imagined the behavior of a lamb kneeling down to drink milk, and finally evolved into a sheep kneeling to thank its mother. It can be seen that people at that time did not understand the objective reasons of things correctly, and simply made subjective judgments from the appearance, imagining it as a result with a beautiful meaning, which eventually led to cognition that did not conform to the facts. Diderot pointed out: "Poets cannot be completely at the mercy of the fanaticism of imagination, which has a certain range". in the Han Dynasty, artisans artistically processed the appearance they saw and imagined the externalized behavior of animals as representing a certain meaning. They used this appearance to develop their imagination and innovate in modeling and gradually formed a higher Layered aesthetic imagery, the sheep was the patron saint of people in ancient times, and people regarded it as a symbol of auspiciousness. The half-lying posture in the aforementioned "lamb kneeling at the breast" implies gratitude and filial piety. Some representatives transform sheep into good conduct. Among them, sheep are also very compatible with "rituals" and play an important role in sacrificial ceremonies. They are also regarded as a symbol of Chinese good conduct. In the "Lamb" in "The Book of Songs Zhaonan," "Mao Shi" wrote when explaining this poem: "The country of Zhaonan, the government of Huawen King, is frugal and upright in office, and is as virtuous as a lamb. "It means that Zhao Nanguo compares the frugal, upright, diligent, diligent kings of the past dynasties to "lambs." It can be seen that sheep were endowed with noble character in ancient times.

It can be seen that people at that time endowed sheep with too many lofty symbolic meanings, which also shows that the ability of imagination directly impacts the originality of aesthetic images and plays a key role. The production of artwork requires relevant creative ability. Most of the creations of Han Dynasty lamps have similar creative experiences, which shows that the shapes of animals almost all follow a certain symbolic meaning. For example, the goat-shaped lamp with a gilded flip cover in the Han Dynasty is shaped like a half-lying sheep. As shown in Figure 4, the limbs are extremely neatly curled under the body, without revealing any excess body, while the sheep's horns are slender and curl upwards. The ears are curled up, the head is forward, and the expression is serious as if listening to important things with full concentration; the expression seems to dare not neglect; this is the appearance of the courtiers in the ideal state of the ruling class submitting to the ruler. In nature, sheep in this state will not appear. Still, when designing lamps and lanterns, craftsmen added shapes that conformed to the aesthetic, symbolic meaning that the ruling class liked at that time and dealt with objective things that did not exist.

Under this big premise, a unique aesthetic image in mind is constructed, which is integrated into the gilded flip-cover sheep-shaped lamp produced. The most surprising thing about this lamp is that it is still usable today. There is a movable button on the back neck of the sheep, and the buttocks are designed to be a structure that can be lifted upwards. After the sheep's back is lifted, it becomes a lamp panel that prevents lamp oil, which can be used for lighting. The overall shape and structure are ingeniously integrated, and the hollow sheep belly holds lamp oil. Compared with other lamps, this lamp has a deeper level of innovation in function. For aesthetics, this is a work of art with both originality and practicality, which is worthy of appreciation by future generations.

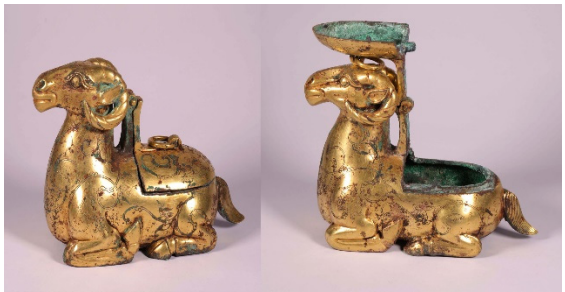


Fig 4. A goat-shaped lamp with a gold-plated flip cover in the Han Dynasty

The bronze lamps of the Han Dynasty are a shining pearl in the long history of lamps. It represents the peak of ancient

Chinese art and technology and embodies countless artisans' exquisite craftsmanship. The many existing lamps are a concrete display of the aesthetic tendency of the ancients and, at the same time, carry the culture of the Han Dynasty and the unique aesthetic characteristics of that era. They belong to the precious cultural heritage of our country and are worthy of appreciation and learning by future generations. The author began to sort out, collect, and analyze many animal bronze lamps in the Han Dynasty with strong interest. Until now, when observing these precious works of art as an aesthetic person, he will naturally have an aesthetic intention. The article describes the aesthetics from a philosophical point of view. The essential characteristics of the imagery researched and analyzed the modeling aesthetics of the Han Dynasty animal bronze lamps and also distinguished the related lamps from a philosophical point of view, breaking the previous perception of aesthetics.

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