

Study on Patterns of Stylized Deer Stone Statues

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Abstract: More than 90% of the stone statues on the Eurasian grasslands have stylized deer patterns, so they are called deer stones. In addition, some deer stones are also engraved with other animal patterns, weapon patterns, and decorative patterns such as dots, rings, and belts. This paper tries to explain the phenomenon of deer worship from the perspective of shamanism and animism on the basis of summarizing the patterns of stylized deer stone statues, and explains the related religious activities and totem worship. The purpose is to further study the phenomenon of deer worship.

Keywords: Stylization, Deer stone statue, Pattern study.

1. Introduction

Deer stone, a kind of stele-shaped stele carving, is extremely widely distributed, almost throughout the entire Eurasian grassland, and is a very typical relic of early grassland culture. Because more than 90% of these stone statues have stylized deer patterns, they are called deer stones. According to the decorative pattern of deer stone, it can be divided into: the first type is realistic type; the second type is stylized; the third type is without deer pattern image. The object of this research is the second category mentioned above, stylized deer stones, that is, stone sculptures with patterned deer images.[1]

2. Jade Dragon Pattern

More than 90% of the deer stone statues on the Eurasian

grasslands have stylized deer patterns. In addition, some deer stones are also carved with animal patterns such as horses, cows, sheep, donkeys, pigs and beasts; even Dots, rings, belts and other decorative patterns as well as bows, swords, knives, hooks, shields and other patterns.

The decorative patterns of stylized deer stone statues are generally divided into upper, middle and lower parts. These three parts are divided by the necklace pattern (mostly single-line or dot-line pattern depiction) and the belt pattern (mostly two-party continuous depiction composed of geometric patterns) patterns that most researchers believe. The upper part is generally decorated with sun, human face, earrings and other patterns, the middle part is mostly decorated with leaping deer patterns or other animal patterns, and the lower part is mostly decorated with some weapons patterns required for hunting activities.



Figure 1. Information about deer stones in Hangai Province, Mongolia (taken at the National Museum of Mongolia)

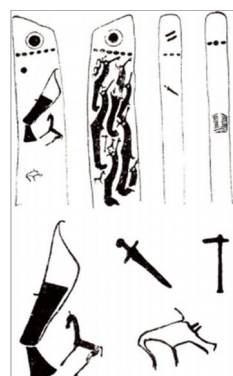


Figure 2. Weapon pattern of deer stone statue



Figure 3. Uushigiin Uvur deer stone statue photo data (taken at the National Museum of Mongolia)

2.1. The top is decorated with suns, human faces, earrings and other geometric patterns.

Sun and star patterns: Most of the deer stone statues are engraved with circle patterns on the top, and some circle patterns are also decorated with patterns similar to sun rays, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. There is a straight line or a dotted line at the bottom, and scholars speculate that it depicts the sun and stars. Below the line is depicted a herd of beak-shaped deer flying head-on towards a circle pattern. In this regard, many people say that this is the ancient people offering sacrifices to the sun, and believe that in the eyes of the ancient nomads, only the fastest deer and horses in the world can follow the most brilliant and vibrant sun in the universe.

Hundreds of deer stones have been discovered, including Sandao Haizi deer stones. It is easy to see that there are many mysterious patterns in the position of the circle, which cannot be covered by the sun. There is a slash, Two, three or five oblique parallel lines, dotted double sets of rings, parallel size or one up and one down double rings, three rings, four rings, five rings, triangle, cone, yin and yang Double sets of rings, and circles with three brackets and more, as shown in Figure 4.

Human face patterns: Among the more than 900 deer stones discovered in Mongolia so far, 14 deer stones have human face images on them. Figure 2: Uushigiin Uvur deer stone statue, which is one of the representative deer stone statues with human faces. The upper part of the statue, not only accurately depicts the man's face, but the ears and the earrings he is wearing are carefully carved and clearly visible. Moreover, the earring on the right ear of the statue also has a pendant. Earrings with such pendants have been found in abundance during archaeological excavations.

Regarding the deer statues with human faces, scholars have different speculations. Some believe that such deer statues are ancestors who are specially respected, or warrior heroes who protect their homes, or more representative real people; some believe that, It contains mystical ideas with deeper mythological content; scholars have also raised the idea that it is a monument, a statue that replaces a deceased real person and is buried in an empty tomb.

Earring pattern: The ring pattern painted on the top of both sides of the deer statue is considered by some scholars to be earrings. Full hoop earrings are divided into four types: with inner and outer decoration, no decoration (single circle), with pendant below, and without pendant. Half hoop earrings do not have any pendant. Admittedly, they may also be symbols of the sun and moon in a hidden sense.

In addition to the clear patterns of human faces and earrings, the tops of some deer statues are also decorated with patterns of headbands, crowns or helmets, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Helmet pattern of deer stone statue



Figure 5. Armor pattern of deer stone statue

2.2. The middle part is decorated with leaping deer patterns, armor, and other animal patterns.

Deer pattern: Fossil-style carved deer statues, mostly decorated with flying deer patterns, the picture composition is compact and the shape is complicated. The depiction of deer pattern generally depicts its side. The body of the deer is plump, the legs are bent upwards, and the back is convex, and the lines of the deer's back are reflected by the curve with obvious ups and downs; the image of the deer's head is weakened, with round eyes. A few deer have eyeballs in their eye sockets, exaggerated beak-like mouths, and scroll-shaped antlers that extend toward their backs but do not meet their rump.[2]

Other Animals: Deer is the most represented animal in deer statues, followed by horses. The animals on many deer stones are not only deer and horses, but also antelopes, cattle, donkeys, wild boars, wolves, tigers, leopards, and other unknown animals.

Armor: The EB statue (No. 63) depicts never-before-seen armor and is very unique, with a large hoop earring depicted on the upper right of the statue, a necklace pattern depicted in dotted lines below, and a tusk tooth pendant. The middle part of the statue is a pattern drawn with thick lines. Scholars speculate that it is a depiction of a square armor, as shown in Figure 5.

2.3. In addition to continuing the typical animal patterns in the middle, the bottom of the deer stone statue is mostly decorated with weapon patterns.

The weapon patterns depicted on deer statues can be

divided into long-range combat, close combat and defensive equipment, including swords, scimitars, flat scimitars, war hoes, battle axes, bows and arrows, spears, helmets, shields, etc. There are many types. Protective equipment includes helmets, armour, wide belts with nameplates, and square and pentagonal shields, as shown in Figure 2.

3. The Symbolic Meaning of Deer Stone

3.1. Deer Stone, Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship, or ancestor worship, refers to a habit of Confucianism (patriarchal religion), and the purpose of general worship is to believe that ancestors will continue to bless their descendants. In most different cultures, ancestor worship is not the same as god worship. Worship to gods is to pray for some benefits, but worship to ancestors generally shows a kind of filial piety.

According to V. D. Kubarev's description of a deer statue in Altai, Russia, "the image of a warrior with a clear gender symbol" and the presence of male organs in the deer statue, he considered it a protector of the tribe, a lover of fertility, a representative of the tribe's wealth and fertility. And given the complexities of the manufacturing and construction process, they depict heroic ancestors who received special veneration. Some scholars have also proposed the idea that the deer stone statue is a monument, a statue that replaced the deceased real person and was buried in an empty tomb.

During the development process from matrilineal clan society to patrilineal clan society, ancestor worship evolved from totem worship. That is to say, in the consciousness of kinship, the thought of worshipping the ancestors of the family is born and derived.

3.2. Deer Stone, Totem Worship

The deer totem is the common cultural heritage of the ancient Mongolian, Central Asia and Mongolian plateau. The totem worship of nomadic people generally uses animals as totems. In the constant struggle with nature, on the one hand, animals are the food they depend on for survival; Objects convey magical information and energy to human beings.

The first sentence of the opening chapter of "The Secret History of Mongolia" reads: "The ancestor of Genghis Khan was Bortechina (Canglang) who was born to bear the destiny, and his wife Kuaimalanle (White Deer) lived together in Tengjisi Hai (Baikal) Lake) came to live in front of Burhan Mountain at the source of the Onon River, and gave birth to a son named Bata Chihan."

The ancient Mongolian people compared Huo'ai Malanle to a docile, agile, and good-carrying white deer and worshiped them as the totem of the clan. Mongolian shamans believe that deer can show spirits and can exorcise evil spirits. The hats worn by shamans in Barhu, Chahar, Horqin and other regions of Inner Mongolia are all decorated with antlers made of iron sheets, and the bronze mirrors and drums used also depict the image of deer, which shows that the Mongolian ancestors, especially the forest Hunters once used deer as their totem gods.

3.3. Deer Stone, Nature Worship

Nature worship refers to the worship of natural objects and natural forces as objects with life, will and great ability. It is

the most primitive form of religion. At that time, people had not yet formed a clear concept of supernatural bodies, but they had begun to have a tendency to supernaturalize natural objects and natural forces.

Shamanism believes that the universe is composed of three parts, namely the upper world, the middle world and the lower world: the upper world is the world in the sky, inhabited by the supreme gods, sun, moon, stars and other gods, as well as some divine animals; the middle world is our human beings. The world inhabited; the Underworld is the subterranean world inhabited by zoomorphs, ghosts, and monsters, often malicious to humans. The division of the upper, middle and lower parts of the deer stone statue coincides with the above statement. The Mongols and their ancestors not only worshiped the heavenly stars, but worshipping the heavenly stars was also an important religious activity in their daily life. The deer is used as the main decorative pattern, probably because the Xianbei people who believe in shamanism regard the deer as a divine beast that reaches heaven.[3]

Mr. Chen Zhaofu once pointed out that in the concept of shamanism, the deer's supernatural power comes from its horns, and he believes that the antlers can help people ascend to heaven. In the book "Shamanism Research" of the Institute of Ethnic Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, it is believed that the fact that the deer is engraved on the stone tablet may be related to the fact that the nomadic people regard the deer as a god worship. This point agrees with Mr. Wang Bo, an archaeological expert at Xinjiang Museum, in his article "A Review of Deer Stones in Xinjiang". It is a standing stone carving used to express the connection between heaven, earth and people. Standing it in the cemetery not only has the significance of worship and commemoration, but also plays the role of witchcraft.”[4]

4. Conclusion

The worship of deer is a global mythological and religious phenomenon. The author very much agrees with the statement that the art of deer and stone statues is all functional. The so-called multi-functionality means that these shapes are by no means "pure art", but "behavior-ritual-witchcraft function, or practice-cognitive function, or symbol-communication function with obviously different degrees of practical function.". The research on stylized deer stone statues in my country started relatively late, and there are not many stylized deer stone statues available for research in China. If we want to further achieve breakthrough research, need more challenges.

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