

Fundamental research on the rise and fall of bronze animals' faces texture in Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasty

Wang Mixiao

Shaanxi Vocational College of Art, Xi'an Shaanxi

Keywords: the Bronze animals' faces texture, gods with human's faces texture, Liangzhu civilization, the Bronze Age, Primitive religion

Abstract: The development of Bronze animals' faces texture is through the growth of the bronze textures in this three dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou, and its achievement can date back to prosperous Liangzhu civilization. This ferocious and magical kind of textures filled with violence-based aesthetics is not only the cultural symbol, but also an individual system through some complicate evolution from different eras. In this paper, based on the overall framework of the three dynasties of bronze civilization's development, combined with the political, cultural, artistic background and aesthetic psychology of inner changes, analyzing and stating the structure of bronze beast grain in the three dynasties and its inherent cultural heritage. What is more, through research to the rise and fall of bronze animal's faces texture, this paper will analyze the historical reasons, religious culture and aesthetic conception for form changes and statue transform of the bronze animals' faces in Shang and Zhou dynasty.

1. The rise of the bronze civilization and the development of the bronze animals' face texture in the three dynasties

When stormy and surging age of barbarism gradually entered the early patriarchal era, with its increasingly rigid hierarchy, primitive wizarding celebrity which is simple, pure and collectivization-based turned to the authoritarian tools and spiritual symbols in the superstructure of some governors and nobility. The smooth, ecological totems of primitive jade and pottery were transformed into grotesque, menacing and ferocious shape-shifting animals, and the lively and happy aesthetic style was gradually replaced by the profound and mysterious aesthetic appeal filled with religious power. A brand new Bronze Age, which broke the primitive civilization's primitive form, carried "the combination of the superhuman historical power and the mystical conception of primitive religions", and filled with the huge civilization system of myth, divine man, hero, war, civilized law, bronze craft and witchcraft etiquette throughout the origin and development of three-dynasty of civilization.

The concept of "Bronze Age" was first put forward and used by Michael Thompson. In the bronze ornamentation system in the three dynasties, there are both the dragon and phoenix totems with complex shapes, and the carvings with twists and curves and strong spirits are totally different from the smooth and light flying below the Warring States period. Kui dragon and Kui phoenix decorations were mainly used in the Shang dynasty and the early and middle West Zhou dynasty,

which is one of the important representatives of bronze decorations system. However, as the core of the bronze sacrificial vessels in Shang dynasty, beast-face textures, in the middle of a vessel, initially defined called "gluttonous textures" by academic field. Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals recorded that "cooking vessels in Zhou dynasty was well-known for gluttonous textures, which didn't have main body but a head. If someone cannot swallow the food, maybe some evil trouble will take place." However, the images of gluttonous textures were all over the bronze vessels of Yin and Shang dynasties, whether they were cast and engraved in the center of the implements as the main ornamentation, or were arranged in the side and corner ribbons as auxiliary ornamentation. Certainly, the animal face texture or gluttony pattern has become a unique totem or image and the animal face texture is like a mirror reflecting on the commercial culture and the true appearance without any makeup of the civilization and art in this period. Compared with Yin and Shang dynasties, the image of phoenix gradually took its place after the middle of West Zhou dynasty. Until the late Western Zhou dynasty, its decoration gradually turned from complexity to simpleness. By the time of the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, it had entered the "new period" according to Mr. Guo Moruo, and divided it into the depraved type and the refined type. It is not only the change of aesthetic fashion, but also the fluctuation of cultural psychology, the transformation of religious emotion, the promotion of historical forces and the rise of ideology.

2. The origin of the bronze animals' face in Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasty——gods with human's faces texture in Liangzhu civilization

Talking about the animal face pattern, we have to mention the well-known national emblem of Liangzhu civilization, "gods with human's faces texture", the complete shape of which is from the "King Cong" in his tomb in Hangzhou, which can be regarded as the core totem and spiritual portrayal of Liangzhu civilization. The author once put forward on the connotation of this complex decoration, which can be divided into three parts, namely "god man", "beast face", "god bird". Combined with Mr. Yang Boda's opinion that "wizard - jade - god" mode, namely, wizard was considered as the core. In the late matriarchal society, as to the transition of the patriarchal society, the evil wizard conveyed divine purport through jade. And wizards gradually become the absolute authority in the field of religion, thus more, by the strength in the clan and military, wizard was regarded as defenders of the actual social order, the core promoters, creators and innovators of production and the cultural. Obviously, the "divine man" in the composite decoration is just such a symbol of both clan power and divine power. He wears a "feather crown" with a "baotou" structure, which is high and broad and radiating, and is full of small pointed beak-like ornamentation and circle-cloud pattern, which express the unity of "god man" and "god bird", as well as the deification of the great wizard under the state of general god.

"Animal face" and "divine bird" reflect people's worship totem and life culture in Liangzhu civilization. Prehistoric people's belief in birds was related to their knowledge of the time and their teaching of farming. The cultural psychological structure of the image of "god bird" of the Liangzhu King Cong is derived from this, which concentrates, contains and reproduces the spiritual totem of farming culture in the Liangzhu civilization, as well as the simple cognition of man to the heaven, and the deep longing for the connection with nature and the gully hidden in the deep blood. "Animal face" is the core of the whole complex decoration. The complete "animal face" on the "King Cong" was endowed by people with a very intense and stern face in Liangzhu civilization, which is not like a wild animal's face: oval circled eyes, wide nose and mouth, pointed fangs. In particular, the double circle of big eyes, which are full of detailed and complicated lines, is completely divorced from the naturalness of realistic animals. The majesty and mysterious

brilliance are full of penetrating power of the soul, just like from the top of the altar overlooking. This decoration from the savage age of fire and blood gave rise to and derived different forms of "animal's face", which gave people different historical feelings and forces of destiny in different periods, and continued to the bronze civilization of Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties.

3. The style change of bronze animals' faces textures in Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties

As the "zhen xiang" and spirit banner created by the wizard group with the core of "Yin" and "Shi", "animal's face texture" ran through the three dynasties and were very popular in Shang and Zhou dynasties. Most scholars have agreed that the "animal face texture" was derived from the "animal face" image in jade culture of Liangzhu civilization. The reason why the "animal face" in the Xia and Shang dynasties was named "taotie" was not only described in Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals, but also related to stressful society in this period. Frequent wars in the late primitive society, as well as large-scale annexation, slaughter and plunder between clans and tribes, greatly promoted the pace of civilization. Compared with the simple Liangzhu civilization, the "beast face" inherited its function as a totem of protection, both as the embodiment of terror and as a god of protection. "It is a symbol of intimidation against alien clans and tribes and a kind of power to protect themselves. And Liangzhu civilization, however, "gods with human's faces texture" constituted the difference is from the inner decoration, through the communication with heaven and earth, nature, induction and wanted to get some kind of "supernatural", in order to establish the harmonious between people and nature, man and god, and a type of close inner link. The simple and persistent, the original ideal on violent aesthetics bronze "beast" drifting away. With time went by, just leaving old rituals and communication medium of the ghosting, and was the period of the objective demands of social development and civilization. It would give more powerful spiritual strength, such as "intimidate, swallow, suppress, treading on one's body and mind", what is more, it became the ruler of the whole country as a mask of god, with its absolute authority to announce the world. Of course, their worship of god has been transformed from primitive totem to a combination of ancestor and totem, while their worship of ancestor god is superior. It means the rise of human power, and the beginning and completion of self-belief.

Although the animal face texture of the Xia dynasty had a certain origin with the animal face of jade in Liangzhu civilization, it was still in the "original period", so the imposing manner and inner spiritual appeal were far less than that of the Shang dynasty. ", "the early rise of bronze, rough grass, simple decoration, lack of beauty to appreciate. The most expressive and varied of the "animal faces" of the Shang dynasty were the orders and horns. In the early Shang dynasty, there were only one pair of animal eyes on the animal face, which was the most direct and real inheritance from the animal face of Liangzhu jade. It continued the worship of heaven and god in the primitive witchcraft rites, as well as the desire to control the power of life. Since the middle, the performance of the beast is more prominent, surrounded by more decorated with thunder and surfaced on the surface of the beast line carvings. This form is quite similar to over-elaborate grain and line engraving on the animal face of Liangzhu jade, which not only highlights the central role of animal face in the overall decorative composition of the vessel, but also shows its transcendent spiritual control in the original voodoo ceremony. Shang dynasty period to the early years of the Western Zhou dynasty, with the coming of the bronze culture stage, beast, the dragon grain, phoenix bird lines as the main grain, "three flowers" adornment gimmick is popular during the hierarchical multiple adornment effect will be the spirit of "beast" brings a person oppressive feeling to the extremely sovereign, charisma and vision as ancient god will end however made in layers of armor, presages a power derived from the ancient totem belief in gods and ancestors.

4. The fall of Bronze animals' faces texture in West Zhou dynasty

The animal face texture in the aspect of horn performance highlights the systematization of this kind of texture. According to the unearthed artifacts so far, they can be divided into: ring-column horn, ox horn, outer curly horn, sheep horn, inner curly horn, tortuous horn, dragon horn, giraffe horn, tiger head, bear head and dragon snake cluster. Mr. Linsbanev believes that these different types of animal faces are related to animal symbols, and are the image symbols handed down from the tribes in the age of Chinese mythology. If we extrapolate from this, we can roughly explain the reason why these "animal faces" became simplified and even eliminated after entering the West Zhou dynasty. Since the middle of the West Zhou dynasty, the dominant position of animal face pattern has gradually been replaced by phoenix bird which is pattern, and simplified and abstract. Until the spring and autumn period and the warring states period, with the adder pattern, the former ferocious momentum was covered by the lively decorative effect. The reasons for the transformation of the dominant position of animal face pattern were diverse and complex, which were not only related to the change of social system and regional totem flag in Shang and Zhou dynasties, but also closely related to the reorganization of cultural psychology at that time. In his book a study of bronze patterns in the Yin and Zhou Era, Mr. Linsbanev mentioned that wild animals with different horns and crest on their heads represented various tribes at that time. These tribes have lived in a community since the mythological era of China, and have inherited the animal symbols handed down by their ancestors from generation to generation. They have become the totem animals of this tribe, as well as the "animal face" images in different forms on bronze vessels.

At the beginning of the West Zhou dynasty, it established a strict and rational human order and became the model and spiritual core of China's ancient feudal dynasties for thousands of years. Conversations from the States has recorded that "The King has a lot of field, the rest of lands were divided by the noble." And Xuzi recorded that "The King governs 71 states, while 53 states belong to the noble." In the past from the ancient myth times of Xia and Shang tribes were replaced with a group with the same name. If the multi-type "beast face" represents the different tribes of the central government of passive support, then "the prosperity of Zhou dynasty began to phoenix bird twittering in Mount Qi, "phoenix bird", embodies the namesake warring states to the base to carry out the "mandate of heaven" absolute obedience. Therefore, the bronze "animal face" of the Shang dynasty was replaced by the dominant position of "phoenix bird" of the West Zhou dynasty, and the role transformation of the two social systems and the internal constitution of the state was expounded from the perspective of artistic form. This is not only the objective appeal of historical development, but also reflects the disintegration and reorganization of the cultural psychological structure of The Times. Secondly, because of the close relationship between ancient political groups and kinship, the war of King Wu's conquest over Yin means the conquest of two different clans. Then, as the spiritual totem and cultural banner of the clan spirit, the animal face pattern was replaced by the phoenix and bird pattern. Just like some totem symbols that were annexed and assimilated in the primitive period, its style and dominant position were weakened or even died out, which was the inevitable track of the historical progress. Thirdly, in the cultural psychological structure of merchants, the worship of ancestors and god is integrated into one. According to Mr. Zhang Guangzhi, in the belief in Shang dynasty, god had no independent dwelling place and was not directly offered. The ancestral gods could "Emperor Bin" and join the ruling group of heaven, and even some ancestors of the Shang dynasty were almost the incarnation of god. In the Shang dynasty, the bronze "animal face" was a combination of the worship of ancestral gods and god, which not only retained the chaos and transitional nature of primitive religion and art, but also symbolized that this civilized kingdom respected gods and ghosts, and had the spirit of "a pious broad-ox, as fiery as fire". In contrast, in the West Zhou dynasty, people not only put forward the

clear concept of "heaven", but also put god above "heaven". Although the two were the objects of worship together with the ancestors of the Zhou people, the aura of deification of the ancestors of the Zhou people has faded. As a new totem flag, "phoenix bird" is not only the image of Zhou culture, but also the embodiment of "virtue" granted by god to the son of Zhou. The intoxication in the primitive altar turned into the cultural core of human order and etiquette and morality, which was the internal reform from the beginning of "beast face" of Xia and Shang dynasties to the prosperity of "phoenix and bird" of West Zhou dynasty. It carries and precipitates the irresistible and profound historical power and cultural rise and fall. Throughout China's ancient decorative system way today, although the beast grain was originated from primitive culture in the West Zhou dynasty and late Zhou dynasty era from the altars to the earth, and even the whole core is dominated by auxiliary ornamental characters, even disappear in the vast bronze civilization, but the system through the key position in the Chinese traditional decorative pattern as "dragon and phoenix" totem, being independent to the system of texture, sublime spiritual connotation, the ancient cultural context, vivid abstract deformation, as well as free walking in between the elegant arts and vulgar art rich ductility, all of these mentioned make it with the vigorous life power and fresh style reform through the origin of our ancient art and the rise and change.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the research finding of the research project of humanities and social science of the Education Department of Shaanxi province "Research on the bronze animals' faces texture system in West Zhou dynasty" (project no.18JK0195).

References

- [1] Li Zehou: *Chinese Aesthetics*, Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2001.
- [2] Ma Chengyuan, *Chinese Bronzes*, Shanghai Ancient Books Press, 2001.
- [3] Wang Zhaowen: *History of Chinese art*, Qilu Press House, 2000.
- [4] Yang Boda: *Wizard-Jade-God; Selected Works of Rank Eight*, Forbidden City Press, 2006.
- [5] Zhang Guangzhi: *China's Bronze Age*, Sanlian Bookstore, 2013.
- [6] Linsnaifu: *Gods and Beasts: Gods in Ancient China*, Sanlian Bookstore, 2016.