

A brief analysis of the functions and characteristics of the jade dragon unearthed in the Shang Dynasty

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Abstract: The jade dragon first appeared in the Hongshan culture in the Neolithic Age, and the jade dragon had the nature of a ritual vessel during this period. The Shang Dynasty entered a slave society, and the productivity was further improved, and the development of jade entered another peak. The jade dragon of this period clearly has multiple meanings and is an important part of understanding the culture of the Shang Dynasty. Based on the research object of some jade dragons with clear excavation units, this paper classifies and stages the jade dragons of the Shang Dynasty in combination with academic research, and discusses the functions of the jade dragons of the Shang Dynasty, as well as the jade materials and jade treatment techniques on this basis, and tries to make a more comprehensive and comprehensive study of the jade dragons of the Shang Dynasty.

1. Introduction

The Shang Dynasty is another peak period for the development of jade in China, inheriting the wind of Red Mountain and Liangzhu in the past, and the rhyme of the Qin and Han dynasties, which is a stage of inheriting the past and opening the future, which is extremely important. The dragon and the phoenix are both fictional images in the legend, and from the unearthed jade objects, the merchants not only cherished the phoenix, but also loved the dragon, which can be seen in the jade dragon shape in the jade and the dragon pattern on the bronze ware. Therefore, the style, material, and jade-making technology embodied in the jade dragon of the Shang Dynasty are the embodiment of the ideology of the time.

2. Characteristics of the Jade Dragon of the Shang Dynasty

2.1. The function of the jade dragon

The Shang Dynasty jade is rich in quantity and diverse in shape, and Mr. Xia Nai divides the Shang Dynasty jade into four categories: "ritual jade", weapons, tools, and ornaments. ^[1]Zheng Zhenxiang divided YinXu jade into seven categories: ritual vessels, ceremonial guards, tools, utensils, ornaments, works of art and miscellaneous utensils. ^[2]Based on the classification of jade in the academic world, combined with the characteristics of the shape of the jade dragon, this paper divides it into three

categories: ritual vessels, tools, and ornaments. However, it should be pointed out that the jade dragon is not a single function, and may also play a decorative role while being used as a ritual vessel.

2.1.1. Ritual utensils

The ritual nature of the jade dragon mainly refers to the Huang-shaped jade dragon, the Jue-shaped jade dragon and the jade dragon. These types of jade dragons are mainly found in the east of Huayuanzhuang M54, the women's tomb M5 and the Qianzhang cemetery. "The major affairs of the country are in worship and Rong". ("Zuo Chuan 13 Years of Chenggong") merchants who obtained the establishment of the dynasty by force paid great attention to sacrifices and conquests. In the prehistoric period, Huang and Jue were representatives of rituals and sacrifices, and most of the prehistoric jade dragon shapes were symbols of religious rituals. The appearance of the Jue-shaped jade dragon and the Huang-shaped jade dragon in the Shang Dynasty is obviously a collection of primitive witchcraft, sacrifices, funeral rites and other activities. As far as the unearthened tombs are concerned, M54 of Huayuanzhuang and M5 of Nuhaio Tomb are both large high-level aristocratic tombs, so some jade dragons are used in funerals in the nature of ritual vessels.

2.1.2. Tools

Tool jade mainly refers to the flaky jade dragon, and the number of tool jade is less in the shape of the jade dragon, which is mainly found in M54 in the east of the garden. Garden Village M54: 354, the tail is in the shape of a carving knife, gradually forming an oblique blade, and the report is named the Kui Long-shaped carving knife. The flaky jade dragon has a variety of shapes, rich colors, and different carving techniques, and combined with the modeling characteristics, this kind of jade dragon should have different meanings. Due to the difficulty of mining and its extreme rarity, jade is generally not used as a production tool. The common tools in the late Shang are axes, adzes, chisels, saws, etc., this kind of dragon head carved knife shape is very rare, this type is also mainly seen in the garden village M54, the tomb owner "Chang" surname man, is a famous nobleman at that time, for the Shang king to fight on the battlefield.^[3] Perhaps influenced by the identity of the tomb owner, these tools were made into the shape of a dragon and used by the tomb owner, but the exact method of use is unknown.

2.1.3. Decorations

The decorations mainly include flaky jade dragons, panqu jade dragons, etc. Combined with the opinions of the academic community, the decorative jade dragon in this paper includes three categories: one is that it may be inlaid on some organic or inorganic matter; One is an accessory used to wear; The other type is for playing and enjoying. This function is mostly seen in the late Yulong period, 72ASM373:12 Kuilong shape, a total of three round holes are drilled in the head and legs, which should be inlaid and attached to some kind of object, and the two single-hole drills at the tail of the tomb of Nuhaio M5:1118 may have the same purpose. Jade Huang was used as a combination of accessories in prehistoric times, such as the Liangzhu culture and the Later Shijiahe culture. The forehead necropolis BM3:5 Huang-shaped jade dragon has a round hole at each end, which may have been used in the same way as in prehistoric times, and was used as a combined jade wearing. In the late period, jade dragons appeared for viewing and playing, mainly with curved jade dragons, and some of the jade dragons with drilled holes may also have this characteristic.

Judging from the location of the excavation, the jade dragon is clearly a symbol of hierarchical status. At present, most of the jade dragons have been unearthened among the royal family and nobles. Taking the Yinxu area as an example, the Jue-shaped jade dragon, the Huang-shaped jade dragon and the jade dragon were basically unearthened in M5 of the Women's Good Tomb and M54 in the east of

Huayuanzhuang, which are in sharp contrast with the number and exquisiteness of the jade dragons unearthed in the civilian cemetery of 70AGXM49 and 86APNM719 in the western area of Yinxu, showing the difference in class rank. The Qianzhang cemetery in Tengzhou can also prove that although the unearthed jade dragon is located in the same cemetery, in terms of the unearthed situation, the jade dragon is mostly found in large and medium-sized tombs. For example, the forefoot is large BM3, M38, etc. The Yin immigrants of the "Shi" clan, who may still have a certain status, moved here shortly after the Eastern Expedition of the Duke of Zhou, and some of the nobles were buried with the Jade Dragon in their tombs.^[4]It can be seen that first of all, the presence or absence of the jade dragon is one of the criteria for distinguishing the big class and grade, and the number of jade dragons unearthed may reflect the level of power and status within the class.

Entering a slave society, different from the prehistoric concept of wealth. During this period, the idea of jade as one of the representatives of wealth profoundly influenced merchants. The ruler's lust for power leads to an unusually strong desire for possession of wealth, especially for the exclusive possession of precious objects.^[5]The dragon itself is an animal imagined by human beings, and the concept of the dragon itself is higher than that of ordinary animals, so the status represented by the jade dragon in the Shang Dynasty is self-evident. Again, especially the jade dragon unearthed in Yinxu as an example, it shows that the jade of the Shang Dynasty appeared patterned and stereotyped. Because it was under the management of the royal family and was mainly used by the royal family, the jade dragon was an important embodiment of the life of the upper class.^[6]

3. Regional characteristics of the Jade Dragon

In terms of quantity and variety, the jade dragon located in Henan has an absolute advantage in all aspects. The number of unearthed jade dragons of all kinds is relatively large, and the early Jue-shaped jade dragon, Huang-shaped jade dragon and jade dragon are more obvious, which are basically not found in the range outside the Central Plains, and this kind of jade dragon can be regarded as a typical representative of the Central Plains ruling area. In the surrounding area, only the number of jade dragons unearthed in the Qian Zhang cemetery is relatively large, with the largest number of Huang-shaped jade dragons, and only one piece of flaky jade dragons can be seen. There is only 1 Huang-shaped jade dragon in Shanxi. There is only 1 piece of flaky jade dragon in Hunan. The imbalance in the distribution of animal-type jade corresponds to the dominance of the Late Shang in the four directions.^[7]The distribution of jade dragons and the number of jade dragons show that the connection between the surrounding area and the ruling center is affected by geography, and the Qian Zhang Necropolis in Teng Zhou, Shandong Province is located in the plain area, and the terrain between the two places is mostly flat and open, as the Yin immigrants of the aristocratic clan were enshrined here, and the number and type of jade dragons reflect a relatively close connection; Located in the cemetery of Lingshi Jingjie in Shanxi Province, it is a nobleman with the surname "Fang" of the late Shang Dynasty, but due to the influence of topography and topography, the number and variety of unearthed jade dragons are not rich, indicating that the connection is not as close as that of Shandong Qianzhang.

In terms of shape, all kinds of jade dragons show their own characteristics. The jade dragon in the Yinxu area is neat and standardized. The specifications and ornaments of the Huang-shaped jade dragon are relatively unified. Open mouth, round eyes, elongated body, carved diamond or cloud pattern. The forefoot cemetery is obviously different from the Huang-shaped jade dragons, most of which have the shape of a one-legged and three-clawed shape. The shape of the Huang-shaped jade dragon of Shanxi Jingjie M2 is more peculiar, the head is a tiger head and tiger ears, the body gradually tapers from head to tail, and the body and tail are carved with more than 19 arcs, similar to the shape of a silkworm body, and the shape of the vessel is also smaller. The flaky jade shape

unearthed from Huangcai Wangjia Tomb Mountain in Ningxiang, Hunan Province is very similar to the M54:354 shape in Huayuanzhuang Dongdi, the difference is that the jade unearthed from Huangcai Wangjia Tomb Mountain in Ningxiang, Hunan Province does not have the carved knife-shaped tail of M54:354, and the shape is more freehand, and the production is not fine enough.

The shape of the jade dragon with feet in the forehead cemetery is only seen in this place, but the shape of the jade dragon with feet is also seen in the Yinxu area. The surrounding cultural artifacts are generally slightly later than the Chinese cultural counterparts.^[4] Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that this kind of Huang-shaped jade dragon in Qianzhang Necropolis combines the Huang-shaped jade dragon and the flaky jade dragon in the Yinxu area, and then integrates the local cultural characteristics to form a unique Huang-shaped jade dragon.

In terms of function, the early ceremonial jade dragon in the Yinxu area, as well as the jade dragon of tool and decoration. The surrounding area is mainly of ritual and decorative nature, and there are no tools. In the process of cultural communication, the nature of ritual utensils and the ideological concepts expressed by the decorative jade dragon and the hierarchical order represented by the jade dragon are obviously stronger than those of the instrumental type. Therefore, there is a difference in the function of the jade dragon in the Central Plains and the surrounding areas.

In summary, the Yinxu area shows a large number and rich species of jade dragons; The jade dragon has the characteristics of realistic modeling and production specifications; In terms of function, it includes three kinds of ritual utensils, tools and ornaments. The number of jade dragons in the surrounding areas is small and the species is relatively single; Part of the jade dragon freehand, integrating local cultural characteristics; In terms of function, there are mainly two kinds of ritual utensils and ornaments.

4. Jade materials and jade treatment techniques

4.1. Jade

The jade dragon of the Shang Dynasty is basically nephrite of tremolite mineral, which is hard, delicate and warm, and has a large number of Hetian jade. Under the influence of the oxidation of iron, manganese and other compounds in jade, light green, dark green, yellowish brown and other colors are generated. The color of the jade of the late Shang dynasty is magnificent and colorful. Generally speaking, green is the majority, with different shades of green, followed by yellowish brown and tan, followed by gray and white. The color of the jade dragon is also in line with the characteristics of this period. On the whole, there are more pale green and cyan, followed by yellow-brown, and white is the least, and all colors are found in various types of jade dragons. It embodies the unity of form and color. The jade material has a delicate texture, both on the surface and inside, you can see the delicacy and delicacy of the jade. This texture not only adds to the beauty of the jade dragon, but also reflects the high standards of material selection and craftsmanship of Shang Dynasty craftsmen. At the same time, the use of the jade dragon color is the penetration and integration of religious colors, reflecting the warm and elegant expression and aesthetic characteristics.

The Shang Dynasty jade has a variety of forms, including the various sources of jade, but also refers to the complexity of jade types, and there are many types, in addition to bi, Yue, Qi, Dage and other ritual vessels, there are also Huang, rings and ornaments in the shape of various animals. As for the source of jade, thanks to the prosperity of jade mining in the Shang Dynasty, there are two main directions that can be known at present. One is the Dushan jade in Nanyang, Henan, and the other is the Hetian jade. But it seems that it is far more than that, the Shang Dynasty broke through the limitations of the Neolithic Age, broke through the regionality, and had a strong ability to distinguish between jade and stone, which also shows the inclusiveness of Shang culture.

4.2. Techniques for treating jade

The Shang Dynasty found a large number of handicraft workshops to show that the processing and manufacturing of various artifacts in this period has been very developed, jade as a specialized handicraft industry, in addition, the application of bronze tools in the jade treatment process, so that the jade technology has been significantly improved. ^[2]Therefore, this period showed the characteristics of a large number and variety of jade, and superb jade treatment technology.

The jade production process, including the jade dragon, generally includes cutting, ground reduction, grinding, carving, drilling, openwork and other processes. Judging from the characteristics of the unearthed jade dragon, there are currently round carving, semi-circular carving, piece carving, relief carving, Yin line carving, Yang line carving and other techniques, and the jade treatment technique is very proficient.

After selecting the desired jade material, it is sawed to get the desired shape. Then, the craftsmen use a variety of grinding tools, such as stone tools, felt tools, and triangular ridge tools, etc., to finely polish and carve the jade material to form various parts such as the dragon's body, dragon's head, and dragon's feet. In addition, some jade dragons also need to be drilled so that they can be worn or suspended. The location of the drilled hole is usually at the top or tail of the jade dragon, and the hole channel is usually straight and the hole wall is smooth. Finally, it is polished to make its surface smooth as a mirror and more exquisite.

In the late Shang period, the Yin line engraving process was particularly prominent, in contrast to the decline of the ritual function at this time, and was impregnated by the bronze culture, and the Yin line engraving process was extremely popular. ^[8]The types of Yin line engraving include single Yin line, parallel Yin line, and double Yin line, among which the use of double Yin line is the most common. ^[9]The prevalence of inscription ornamentation in the late Shang period was not only driven by the social, political, religious and other internal factors at that time, but also directly related to the support of objective conditions such as the invention of new tools under the impetus of internal factors.

The hollowing of jade in the late Shang Dynasty is also made to highlight the shape, because most of its hollow parts are located on the edge of jade birds, jade dragons, jade people and jade beast faces, etc., and the hollow shape is clear and can produce a large decorative effect, so it is called "edge decoration hollowing". ^[10]The Jue-shaped jade dragon unearthed in Yinxu and the ridges and teeth on the back of the annular jade dragon are the decorative techniques of edge decoration hollowing, which greatly increases the sense of shape and aesthetics of the jade dragon.

The Shang Dynasty had a certain tendency in the selection of jade dragon jade materials. The jade material shows the characteristics of soft color and delicate texture. In the jade treatment techniques, the Yin line carving, round carving, relief carving and other techniques are very superb, and the jade dragon shape is very characteristic of the times, reflecting the unique aesthetic characteristics of the merchants and the jade treatment technology.

5. Conclusion

The period when the jade dragon appeared in the Shang Dynasty was the Late Shang, specifically referring to the second to fourth periods of the Yinxu culture, and the latest to the early part of the early Western Zhou Dynasty; Combined with the age of the tomb and the characteristics of the pottery, it is concluded that the jade dragon of the Shang Dynasty is divided into two periods: early and late. In the context of a slave society, the jade dragon was mainly unearthed in large and medium-sized tombs, which shows that the jade dragon is a symbol of hierarchical status and wealth. The jade dragon mainly contains three types of functions: ritual utensils, tools, and ornaments, which can be used in funerals, or can be used for decoration and wearing, depending on the use scene, reflecting the upper social life of the royal family and nobles. Secondly, the jade dragon shows certain regional

differences in terms of quantity, type, shape and function. In terms of function, it includes three kinds of ritual utensils, tools and ornaments. The number of jade dragons in the surrounding areas is small and the species is relatively single; Part of the jade dragon freehand, the integration of local cultural characteristics, the function of the main ritual utensils, ornaments two kinds. Merchants have a certain tendency when choosing jade dragon jade materials. The jade material shows the characteristics of soft color and delicate texture. In the jade treatment techniques, the Yin line carving, round carving, relief carving and other techniques are very superb, and the jade dragon shape is very characteristic of the times, reflecting the unique aesthetic characteristics of the merchants and the jade treatment technology.

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