

# Analysis of the Influence of Wei-Jin Style on Stone Carving Art in the Northern and Southern Dynasties

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**Abstract:** *Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties in Chinese history is a major turning point, regardless of economic, political, military, cultural and the entire ideology, including philosophy, religion and literature and so on, are undergoing tremendous changes. However, in this turbulent and changeable era, the three kingdoms, the decline of the empire, the rapid change of the north and south regimes, the literati were forced to deal with the ideological crisis, the introduction of Buddhism, the grotto art and so on. This series of changes will show what kind of state and characteristics of the times, and how to breed a series of magnificent and elegant stone carving art with its own characteristics of the times. Based on the analysis of the characteristics of the times in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, this paper extracts the characteristics of stone sculpture in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, and explores the reasons for the characteristics of stone sculpture in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties and the influence of Wei-Jin style on the art of stone sculpture in the Wei Jin Dynasties, in order to provide some reference value for the study of the formation and development of stone sculpture art in this period.*

**Keywords:** *Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, Stone carving art, Divine beast, Magnificen, Elegant*

## 1. Introduction

Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties is a very important era in the history of ancient China, social and political unrest, the regime change constantly, but this period of literary thought and aesthetic thought is very active, can be described as "contention". At this time, the literati artists' self-consciousness was awakened, and they paid great attention to the expression of self-worth, thus forming a unique Wei-Jin style. This demeanor deeply influenced the characteristics of stone carving art in this period. As a branch of art in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, the stone carving art is solemn, fierce and elegant, which represents the typical artistic style of the Wei Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. So, how does the Wei-Jin style affect the art of stone carving? We must first discuss the characteristics of the times from the Northern and Southern Dynasties.

## 2. The Characteristics of the Times in Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties

"The night is too long to sleep, and the tomorrow is too hot. If you want to hear the sound of the scattered call, you should not answer the promise of the air." ("Wu Shengge") This poem is from the mouth of a poet in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. The desolation and resentment in the poem vividly reflects the fickle and tragic misfortune of this period. In the poem, the poet seems to be able to hear the call of his lover who is far away at night, while the poet who is wandering in a foreign land can only respond to the call of his lover to himself in imagination. In the tragic era, many common people and scholars, who are in precarious times, can only sigh while passively avoiding the world to entertain themselves.

During the turbulent period of the Wei Jin Northern and Southern Dynasties, there were inheriting the traditional southern culture and the northern multi-ethnic cross-inhabitation, which added many new and important elements to the traditional culture. No matter how prosperous the north and the south are, they are also like a horse lantern. They are built quickly and disappear quickly. Similarly, no matter in the south or the north, the war is continuous, no matter in the people or intellectuals, because the Confucian ideology cannot guarantee the peace and prosperity of the country, people gradually lose trust in this ideology. At that time, the government and the patriarchal system were in constant crisis,

and the patriarchal system was the only means to protect the privileges of the aristocracy. Anxious intellectuals tried to find a more humanized vision, such as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forest, Tao Qian, and others. They gathered together to pursue the interest of returning to nature, and to pursue a quiet and noble life, which reflected the changes in cultural fashion during this period. However, this "nobility" exactly reflected the instability of the ruling class at that time, which was probably caused by fear[1-3].

Although this kind of uneasiness has continued, with internal and external wars, culture and art itself continue to continue and grow. During the Wei Jin Northern and Southern Dynasties, that is, the fourth century AD, two of the greatest artists in Chinese history, Gu Kaizhi and Wang Xizhi, were born. Gu Kaizhi's light, smooth, vigorous and refreshing painting style of "spring silkworm spinning" and his famous aesthetic thought of "metaphysics" are bound to affect future generations, and even open a new chapter. A century later, Dai Kui, the sculptor, inherited his painting style through the stone reliefs in Longmen Grottoes. In this era full of speculation, many philosophers, writers and theorists are naturally bred. For example, Xie He, an esthetician who put forward the famous "six methods", took the vivid charm as the first of the six methods, indicating that under the evolution of the times, the Confucian doctrine gradually declined, which also led to the emergence of new aesthetic ideas. A new Chinese decorative technique, "carving the dragon", began to be born in Liu Xie's "Wen Xin Diao Long", indicating that the work should achieve a simple and elegant aesthetic sense.

### 3. The Characteristics of Stone Carvings in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties

From the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, the rulers changed the bad customs of thick burial in the Eastern Han Dynasty and changed thick burial into thin burial. So far, there is no record of the imperial tombs in the Three Kingdoms and the Jin Dynasties, and no physical preservation. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the ancestors left us a huge and magnificent stone forest of tombs. Here, in order to highlight the unique characteristics of the tomb stone carving of the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, the following is divided into two parts, which are respectively brief description of the tomb stone carving of the Qin-Han Dynasties and the tomb stone carving of the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

During the Qin-Han Dynasties, in addition to the underground sculptures, there are also spectacular tomb decoration sculptures on the surface. The existing stone carving art includes: Shaanxi Huo Qubing tomb stone carving, Shaanxi Zhang Qian Western Han stone beast, Shanxi stone tiger, Qinghai stone tiger and so on. In addition, there are two stone beasts in front of the tomb of the Taishouzong of Runan in Nanyang, Henan Province in the Eastern Han Dynasty, "one is Tianlu, the other is Pixie" (Fig.1-3). Judging from the allusions "Hanshu·Western Regions" and "Shanhaijing" and the existing stone carving groups, this kind of divine beast shape with one horn, two horns and two wings is an excellent tradition in China. The integration of Qin-Han Dynasties tomb stone sculptures, although they are not faithfully modeled, but highlights the characteristics of the animal's limbs are strong and dignified and God's martial majesty, they open their mouths, breasts, hips, shoulders carved wings, legs forward to do the shape, glowing with a strong masculine beauty, clumsy gas[4-5].



Figure 1: "Pixie", a sculpture of the late Eastern Han Dynasty, 165cm high



Figure 2: "Tianlu", a sculpture of the late Eastern Han Dynasty, 165cm high



Figure 3: "Pixie", a sculpture of the late Eastern Han Dynasty, 165cm high

In the Wei Jin Dynasties, the funeral style changed from thick burial to thin burial, and the simplified funeral style was "no seal, no tree" and "no Ming ware". There were few tomb sculptures, even no physical objects.

In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the system of tomb iconography began to recover. A large number of northern mound-style tombs began to appear in the Northern Wei Dynasty, which is the result of the Xianbei nationality's policy of sinicization and the integration of Han culture. The stone carvings of the tombs of the Northern Dynasty emphasize large blocks and large faces, which are full of a sense of integrity. The sculpture of tombs in the Southern Dynasty has made greater progress, which is reflected in the following five aspects:

First, the sculpture is very large and magnificent, and the whole sculpture art is full of volume and sense of life.

Second, in terms of placement, sculpture art is directly associated with the mountains and shrines, not with ancestral halls, towers, monuments and columns, as in the Eastern Han Dynasty. In this way, the change of visual scale and reference objects highlighted the bearing and strength of stone beasts in the Southern Dynasty.

Third, the divine beasts of the Southern Dynasty broke the space limit and were more flexible and flexible in shape. The chest, neck, trunk, limbs and claws were more flexible and flexible, and there were changes that were eager to try and flexible.

The fourth is that the divine beast is strong and strong, with its eyes open, its shoulder blades high, its muscles protruding, its toes and claws flailing, its head swaggering, and its hair and whiskers fluttering.

Fifthly, the overall shape is vigorous and complete without losing the delicate depiction of details. The ornate decoration forms a perfect unity, which is embodied in the wings of the shoulder, the long beard under the forehead, and the long hair on the back of the hip. In these rich and varied, deep or shallow decorative carvings, the perfect combination of lines and plane dimensions reflects the sense of rhythm and rhythm (Fig. 4-5).



*Figure 4: "Tian Lu", a sculpture of the Southern Dynasties, 280 cm high and 315 cm long*



*Figure 5: "Tian Lu", a sculpture of the Southern Dynasties, 242 cm high and 290 cm long*

#### **4. The Connotation of Wei-Jin Style**

During the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, the Confucian classics of the two Han dynasties, which had been in a dominant position, began to collapse, the era of turmoil, the peasant revolution, the dawn people and the aristocrats of the aristocratic family began to seek new spiritual sustenance, and supported them to cope with this precarious and bleak life. The most typical representative is the world outlook and outlook on life of the landlord class of the patriarchal clan, which formed a new concept system. From scripture to fatalism, from superstition of ghosts and gods to denial and doubt of moral integrity, the focus began to shift to people themselves, and the awakening and pursuit of internal personality began. The Wei-Jin period was just a time when philosophy was liberated, thought was very active, questions were raised, and harvest was very fruitful. In this period, speculative philosophy reached unprecedented depth and purity. Like the poems of the Wei-Jin dynasties, the tomb stone carvings of this period can be passed on through the ages with the sigh of the eternal proposition "life is impermanent and life is easy to grow old", because it is inseparable from the unprecedented ideas emerging in this era and the specific content of the times contained in the thoughts and emotions. This new view and new attitude is: how to consciously grasp this short and suffering life

in a meaningful way and make it more abundant and satisfying, in fact, marks the awakening of people, that is, under the condition of doubting and denying the old traditions and belief values, people rediscover, ponder, grasp and pursue their own life, meaning and destiny. It is in this sigh of life that we express a kind of uplifting and inspiring mood and emotion. It is precisely because of this awakening of people that this content has the beauty of students. In the view of the author, the most valuable thing in this era is the pursuit and yearning for freedom in the spirit of human beings. People begin to set out to enter the world and feel helpless after entering the world. Regardless of whether they are born or not, they all find a feasible way to comfort their souls, instead of seeking gods and worshipping Buddha to bind their desires and distort themselves, as in the Qin-Han dynasties. The seven sages of the bamboo forest and Tao Yuanming are typical representatives[6].

## 5. The Integration of Stone Carving Art and Wei-Jin Style

This era nourishes the art of the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, and the art of the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties reflects the art of this era. Whether people or things, they all embody a majestic, frank, free and unrestrained spirit. From the elegant and free portrait brick image of the seven sages in the bamboo forest to Wang Xizhi's vertical and elegant Lanting preface, from Gu Kaizhi's clever but powerful spring silkworm silk drawing to the mausoleum stone carvings of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the solemn, majestic and elegant gorgeous beasts all embody the typical externalization of an inherent dignified but free spirit, because in essence, they all come from the same thing, that is, the spirit of the times, life and freedom, charm and spirit, that is, Wei-Jin style. The Wei-Jin style, in turn, achieved the tomb stone carvings of the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties, which is a rare flower in the history of Chinese art. Compared with the tomb stone carvings of the Qin-Han Dynasties and the stone carvings of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the former is clumsy and dignified, while the latter increases the curvature of the shape on the basis of it, so that the wings are more expanded and flexible, and the whiskers and relief decoration are added to make the original line sense more flexible and smooth. The whole image is powerful and vigorous, eager to try, as if to rise in the air, overlooking the land of China, all over the sea, to see who is the next hegemony, who can win a banner in this lingering imperial power to strive for hegemony.

## 6. Conclusion

As Mr. Zong Baihua said, "The late Han Dynasty, Wei Jin Dynasties and Six Dynasties were the most chaotic times in politics and the most painful times in society in China. However, they were the most free and liberated times in spirit, the most intelligent and enthusiastic times, and therefore the most artistic era." In such a special era, scholars and talents woke up in ideology, and they focused on their own values, relying on the metaphysics of the Wei Jin Dynasties, the expression of emotion in the natural landscape reflects the style of the Wei Jin Dynasties, and deeply affects the style of stone carving art. The influence of the style of the Wei Jin Dynasties on the stone carving art is not only reflected in the magnificent, flexible and smooth artistic style, but also reflected in the pursuit of freedom of life expressed by the creators through art.

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