Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art: Cultural Value, Aesthetic and Artistic influence in the Context of Chinese Contemporary Art

Bo Li

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation

November 2024

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วิทยานิพนธ์

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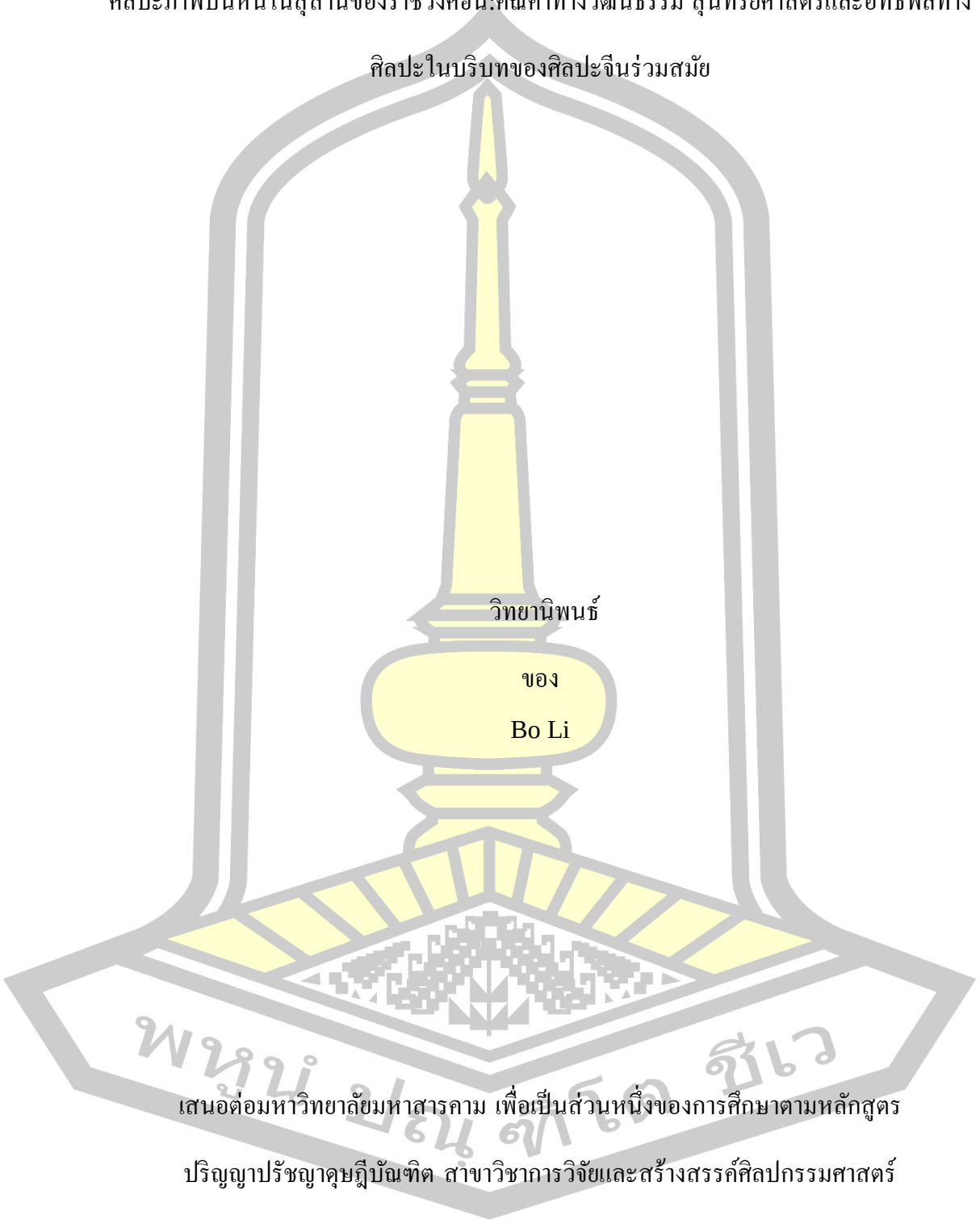

เสนอต่อมหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตร ปริญญาปรัชญาดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาการวิจัยและสร้างสรรค์ศิลปกรรมศาสตร์

พฤศจิกายน 2567

ลิขสิทธิ์เป็นของมหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

พหูน ปณฺ ฑิโต ชีเว

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พหูน ปณฺ ฑิโต ชีเว

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DEGREE Doctor of Philosophy **MAJOR** Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation

UNIVERSITY Mahasarakham University **YEAR** 2024

ABSTRACT

This study selected the Han Dynasty stone relief art as the research object, and the research objectives are: 1) to study the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of the Han Dynasty stone relief art. 2) to study and analyze the cultural value of the Han Dynasty stone relief art. 3) to study and analyze the aesthetics of the Han Dynasty stone relief art. 4) to study and analyze the artistic influence of the Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art. Qualitative research methods were used according to the above objectives. First, by using the literature analysis method, through studying the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of the Han Dynasty stone relief art, it was found that the geographical distribution of the Han Dynasty stone relief art, the artistic themes and artistic styles of the distribution area are all related to the historical development of the distribution area. The prosperity and decline of the stone relief art are closely related to the political, economic and cultural environment at that time. Secondly, through the collection of relevant literature and field investigation to obtain relevant information, the cultural value of the Han Dynasty stone relief art was studied and analyzed from three levels: material culture, communication culture, and spiritual culture. The multi-level cultural value of the Han Dynasty stone relief art was revealed. The study proves that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are not only a faithful record of the material life of the Han Dynasty society, but also have the value of the spiritual culture and social interaction of the Han Dynasty. Third, through field research and literature analysis of the Han Dynasty stone relief art, the aesthetic framework proposed by Mr. Ye Lang is used to divide the Han Dynasty stone relief art into three levels: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content for in-depth analysis, revealing the complexity and multi-level nature of this art form. The study shows that the Han Dynasty stone relief art not only demonstrates superb carving skills at the technical

level, but also shows great artistic creativity in the form of expression. It also reflects the understanding and pursuit of society, nature and the ideal world of the Han people at the ideological level.

Finally, the artistic influence of the Han Dynasty stone relief art on the creation of contemporary Chinese art is studied and analyzed. Through relevant literature and a large amount of field research, using the concept of artistic influence, the information obtained is studied and analyzed and it is found that the composition method, line characteristics, modeling characteristics and content implications of the Han Dynasty stone relief art are applied to the creation of contemporary Chinese art. This study reveals that the Han Dynasty stone relief art not only affects the creation of contemporary art in form, but also injects profound cultural connotations into contemporary art at the ideological level, promoting the diversification and innovation of contemporary Chinese art.

The results of this study have important academic value and practical significance, which is conducive to the dissemination of the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art, provides good inspiration for the development of contemporary Chinese art, and provides valuable reference for exploring the combination of traditional art and contemporary art.

Keyword : Han Dynasty stone relief art, culture value, aesthetics, artistic influence, contemporary Chinese art

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although three years have passed quickly, I have a deep affection for this school. Studying here not only allows me to re-experience the simplicity and beauty of student life, but also allows me to learn new knowledge and research methods in the research process, further improving my knowledge and literacy. Of course, I also encountered various difficulties and confusions in this research process. With the help of my tutor, I finally successfully completed my doctoral research and thesis writing. More important than graduating successfully is that the hard work, selfless guidance, and excellent qualities of the teachers have given me the right guidance, which will benefit me for life. Studying here not only allowed me to experience the simplicity and beauty of student life again, but also allowed me to learn new knowledge and research methods in the research process, further improving my knowledge and literacy. Of course, I encountered various difficulties and confusions during this research process. With the help of my supervisor, I finally successfully completed my doctoral research and thesis writing. More important than graduating successfully, the hard work, selfless guidance, and excellent qualities of the teachers gave me the right guidance, which benefited me for life.

First, I would like to express my special thanks to my doctoral supervisor Professor Metta Sirisuk and the respected Dr. KeYihan. Their careful guidance, constant encouragement and strict requirements have benefited me a lot. Since I was mainly engaged in painting practice teaching and artistic creation before, my research foundation was relatively weak, and I felt a lot of pressure when I first encountered academic research.

During the entire writing process of the doctoral dissertation, from selecting topics, selecting cases, collecting data to completing the manuscript, Professor Metta Sirisuk and Dr. KeYihan have always given me careful guidance. This not only enabled my research to be completed smoothly, but also allowed me to learn how to research. At

the same time, their guidance not only helped me complete the research smoothly, but also taught me how to conduct academic research. During the completion of the thesis, Professor Metta Sirisuk's keen insight and profound academic accomplishment deeply influenced me, and her care for students became an important driving force for me to complete my research. In addition, I would like to thank Associate Professor Arkom Sangiamviboon, whose suggestions provided a new perspective for my research. I would like to thank Professor Supachai Singyabuth for his guidance. He allowed me to master a variety of research methods and encouraged me to clarify the direction of my creation and research. I would like to thank Assistant Professor Perra Phanlukthao for his care and guidance in academic and life. His character has deeply influenced me and is my role model for learning.

I would like to thank the experts, scholars, collectors and artists who provided me with rich materials during my doctoral thesis research. The real and valuable materials they provided allowed me to quickly obtain first-hand information. At the same time, I would also like to thank my classmates. Our common dreams and sincere sharing provided valuable inspiration for my thesis writing.

During the research process, I encountered many challenges and difficulties. Fortunately, with the help of teachers, I gradually found ways to cope with them. I not only completed the paper writing, but also learned the methods and skills of research. My study here is coming to an end, which makes me feel nostalgic. But from another perspective, this is also a new starting point. In the days to come, I will continue to work hard to apply the knowledge and abilities I have gained here to future research and teaching, contribute to academic and educational careers, and realize greater life value.

Bo Li

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Research background

The Han Dynasty, from 206 BC to 220 AD, is an important period in Chinese history, divided into the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty (Wang & Sun, 1999, p. 264-265). The Western Han Dynasty, from 206 BC to 9 AD, was established by Emperor Gaozu of Han, Liu Bang, and ended the tyranny and chaos of the Qin Dynasty. Liu Bang overthrew Xiang Yu, unified the country, and established a relatively stable regime. The Western Han Dynasty established its capital in Chang'an (now Xi'an, Shaanxi), and the country gradually prospered. In the late Western Han Dynasty, Wang Mang usurped the throne and established the Xin Dynasty, from 9 AD to 23 AD. The Xin Dynasty was short-lived and turbulent. In 23 AD, Emperor Guangwu of Han, Liu Xiu, overthrew the Xin Dynasty and established the Eastern Han Dynasty. The Eastern Han Dynasty established its capital in Luoyang (now Luoyang, Henan). In the early Eastern Han Dynasty, the political situation was stable, and the economy and culture were developed. However, in the later period, the regime gradually became corrupt, and the society was turbulent, and it was eventually replaced by Cao Wei and entered the Three Kingdoms period (Zhang Qingli. 2023, p. 56-58).

The Han Dynasty was a powerful dynasty in the early feudal society. It played an important role in the development of Chinese history and culture and was one of the golden ages of ancient Chinese civilization. From 206 BC to 220 AD, there were 24 emperors who ruled for more than 400 years.

The Han Dynasty inherited and developed the centralized power system of the Qin Dynasty and implemented a centralized power system. Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang, abolished some harsh policies of the Qin Dynasty, implemented a policy of recuperation, reduced taxes and labor service, and restored economic and

social order. Secondly, the Han Dynasty implemented a dual system of prefectures and states, setting up prefectures and counties in local areas to manage local affairs, and setting up vassal states in some areas (ruled by Liu Bang's relatives or meritorious officials as vassal kings). This system is conducive to consolidating central power and easing conflicts between the central and local governments. Thirdly, the Han Dynasty established the system of examination and recommendation and the nine-rank system. The system of recommendation selects officials through recommendation and examination, and most of the selected officials are virtuous and capable people. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, the nine-rank system began to rise, which had a certain impact on the official selection system in later generations (Wang Gaoxin, 2012, p.23-25).

The Han Dynasty witnessed remarkable progress in agricultural technology. The promotion of iron tools and ox-drawn plows improved agricultural productivity. The government encouraged land reclamation and implemented the military farming system, which increased the area of arable land and promoted agricultural production (Ji Zhouli, 2023, p.81-103) . Secondly, the Han Dynasty was a prosperous commercial society. The government monopolized important commodities such as salt and iron and controlled the economic lifeline. The opening of the "Silk Road" during the Western Han Dynasty promoted Sino-Western trade and cultural exchanges. Han Dynasty products such as silk and lacquerware were exported to Central Asia and Europe. Thirdly, the Han Dynasty unified the currency system, minted "Wuzhu coins", implemented strict currency management policies, and stabilized the economic order. The government also implemented a policy of equal transportation and unified prices to regulate market prices and prevent price fluctuations (Song Yanping, 2023, p.127-128).

During the Han Dynasty, culture made great progress and Confucianism flourished. In the early Han Dynasty, the rulers advocated the Huang-Lao school of thought and ruled by "non-action". However, starting from Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, Dong Zhongshu advocated "rejecting all schools of thought and respecting Confucianism

alone" [1], and Confucianism became the orthodox thought of the country, with far-reaching influence. The Confucian classics "Five Classics" were systematically compiled and annotated, becoming a must-read book for scholars (Hui Wei, 2016, p.81-103). Science and technology also made great progress. Zhang Heng invented the seismometer to determine the direction of earthquakes; Cai Lun improved papermaking, which greatly increased the production of paper. The invention of paper had a far-reaching impact on later generations. In addition, there were many important discoveries and inventions in astronomy and medicine. Literature and art flourished. Sima Qian's "Records of the Grand Historian" pioneered the biographical historiography and was praised as "the peerless masterpiece of historiography, the unrhymed "Li Sao"". The literature of the Han Dynasty was dominated by fu and Ban Gu's "Fu of the Two Capitals", Zhang Heng's "Fu of the Two Capitals", Sima Xiangru's "Fu of Taixu" and other important works. Art forms such as painting and sculpture also achieved great achievements, and stone carving became the representative of the artistic style of this period (Bao Lei. 2020, p.11-12).

Social life in the Han Dynasty mainly includes three aspects: family and social structure, marriage and family, and clothing and diet. The social structure of the Han Dynasty was based on the family as the basic unit. The family had a strict hierarchy and attached importance to filial piety and clan concepts. The social classes were distinct, with scholars, farmers, workers, and merchants each having their own division of labor, and merchants had a lower status. Most marriages in the Han Dynasty were arranged by parents, who attached importance to the compatibility of social status and economic status. Family life was centered on patriarchal researcherity, and women had a lower status, but played an important role in housework management and production labor. Han Dynasty clothing was characterized by wide-sleeved long robes, and there were

[1] Dong Zhongshu proposed a policy of cultural education that rejected all schools of thought and respected Confucianism alone, which was a landmark event in Chinese history. This policy was followed by almost all subsequent rulers for two thousand years and had a profound impact on the development of Chinese culture and education and the formation of the common psychological qualities of all ethnic groups.

obvious differences in clothing for different classes and identities. In terms of diet, there were many kinds of food in the Han Dynasty, mainly grains, and meat, vegetables, fruits, etc. were also common. Feast culture was prevalent, and nobles and dignitaries often held luxurious banquets (Wang Lina. 2020, p.120-122).

Religious beliefs in the Han Dynasty were diverse, including traditional ancestor worship, natural god worship, and the introduction of foreign religions such as Buddhism. Taoism gradually took shape in the Han Dynasty, and the Huang-Lao doctrine and immortal thought had an important influence on its development. The rulers of the Han Dynasty often used religion to consolidate their rule, and the rituals of worshiping heaven and earth, ancestors, and important gods became important national rituals (Liu Lili. 2021, p. 43-45).

In summary, the Han Dynasty was an important period in Chinese history, with remarkable achievements in politics, economy, culture and society. The centralized system, the dual system of prefectures and states, the development of agriculture and commerce, the prosperity of Confucianism, and the progress of science and culture in the Han Dynasty had a profound impact on later generations. By studying the Han Dynasty, we can better understand the operating mechanism and cultural heritage of ancient Chinese society, and thus better appreciate the great achievements and rich heritage of Chinese civilization. One of the most distinctive art forms of the Han Dynasty is stone relief.

Han Dynasty relief stones, also known as flower-shaped stones, refer to the carved patterns on architectural stones used for tombs, ancestral halls, tomb towers, temple towers, etc. during the Han and Wei dynasties. This art form represents exquisite stone carving craftsmanship and is mainly related to funeral architecture. Therefore, Han Dynasty relief stones are essentially a ritualistic funeral art. These relief stones not only mark the peak of the development of Chinese classical art before the Han Dynasty, but also have a profound impact on later art forms and occupy an important position in the history of Chinese art (Li Weixiang, 2020, p.11-12).

Stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is a treasure of ancient Chinese cultural heritage. Most of the stone reliefs unearthed in modern times are relics of the Qin and Han Dynasties. The stone reliefs are widely distributed, mainly in Nanyang, Henan, northern Hubei, Shandong, northern Jiangsu, northern Anhui, Sichuan, northern Shaanxi and northwestern Shanxi. In addition, there are also sporadic discoveries in Xinmi, Yongcheng, Henan, Fengtai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, Binxian, Shaanxi and other places. Most of these stone reliefs were carved on tombs, coffins, niches and tomb towers by anonymous folk artists using stone as materials and chisels as pens. They are precious stone carvings.

Stone relief carving requires a variety of tools, mainly including the following:

Chisels are the main tools for carving stone, and they come in different shapes and sizes to meet various carving needs. Hammers are used to strike the chisels and drive them into the stone for carving. Gravers are small, fine carving tools used for complex work. Grinding tools are used to smooth and polish the surface of stone, making it more delicate and exquisite (Jia Qun, 2023, p.83-85).

Stone carvings are usually made of hard, carvable stones, including bluestone, sandstone, marble, and granite. Bluestone is one of the most common stones used in Han Dynasty relief stones. This stone is hard and dark in color, usually gray or gray-green. Due to its high hardness, bluestone is suitable for relief and line carving, which can show rich details and layering. Sandstone is also one of the commonly used materials in Han Dynasty relief stones. Compared with bluestone, sandstone is softer in texture and lighter in color, usually yellow, gray or red. Sandstone is easy to carve and suitable for delicate intaglio or bas-relief performance. Because sandstone is relatively soft, craftsmen can more easily carve complex patterns and fine lines on it. Although granite is rarely used in Han Dynasty relief stones, it is also used in some areas. Granite has a very hard texture and is mostly grayish white or grayish black in color. This stone is not easy to carve, but because of its hardness and durability, it is often used in buildings and carvings that need to be preserved for a long time, such as

the outer walls of tombs or important sacrificial sites. Limestone also has a certain application in Han Dynasty relief stones. Limestone is a soft material that is usually off-white or yellowish in color. It is easy to work with and is suitable for creating intricate patterns and details.

Shale is a relatively layered stone material, which was occasionally used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Shale is relatively brittle and easily peels or cracks when carved, so it is rarely used for large or complex pattern carvings and is usually used for some simple decorative carvings.

The selection of these stones not only depends on the local natural resources, but also is influenced by the craft traditions and cultural customs of different regions in the Han Dynasty. The physical properties of different stones affect the carving techniques and artistic expressions of the stone reliefs, making the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty present diverse styles and characteristics in different regions (Yuhang, 2012, p123-124).

Most of the craftsmen who made the stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty came from the folks. They usually started to learn carving, painting and other skills from a young age, and the skills were mainly passed down through the family or apprenticeship system. The craftsmen accumulated experience by participating in large-scale projects such as folk architecture and tombs, and gradually formed their own style and skills. Most of these craftsmen came from civilian families and made a living by their skills. Their works mostly reflect the life scenes and beliefs of the people, and have strong local characteristics. The craftsmen engaged in the art of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty were like the artists who carved and painted in ancient Greece. They were all slaves and civilians, and the feudal nobles disdained to do such things. It can be seen from this that "artists" are "craftsmen" or "craftsmen" and have a humble status. The recipients of the stone reliefs were mainly nobles and royal families. Stone reliefs were often used to decorate the tombs and ancestral halls of royal families and nobles, depicting their lives and achievements.

But some wealthy civilian families also used stone reliefs to decorate tombs to commemorate the dead.

In summary, the stone relief art is an important cultural heritage of ancient China. Through complex production processes and exquisite carving techniques, it has left rich historical and cultural information. The diversity of production tools, the choice of materials, the craftsmanship of craftsmen, and the needs of recipients have all created this unique art form. The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is rich in content and diverse in subject matter, reflecting various aspects of the society, customs, systems, religious beliefs, etc. of the Han Dynasty. They are not only exquisite ancient stone carvings, but also valuable resources for studying the politics, economy, and culture of the Han Dynasty.

The themes and contents of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty mainly include three aspects: the record of real life, the depiction of historical stories, and the yearning for the fairyland. For example, the records of real life on the stone reliefs include welcoming and seeing off guests, traveling by car and horse, receiving guests, kitchen banquets, music and dance performances, acrobatics, bells and tripods, chess games, hunting and archery, sword and ball games, training elephants and snakes, fishing and hunting, pavilions and towers, and gate guards. These scenes widely reflect the wealth and assets owned by the tomb owner during his lifetime. From mountains, forests and ponds to high-rise houses, these scenes together constitute a complete picture of the manor economy, which is the material basis of the lifestyle that the tomb owner yearns for. Similarly, this concept of wealth has also been transplanted to the imaginary fairyland (Li Hanxiao & Xin Zaixu, 2020, p.67-68).

Description of historical stories: The ancestors of the Han Dynasty were good at thinking and worshipping. Although the royal family abolished the Hundred Schools of Thought and respected Confucianism, Taoist thought and folk religion were still very active in society, on par with the dominant Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties at that time. While people abided by the ethical and moral constraints of

loyalty to the emperor and filial piety, they also admired virtuous ministers, military exploits, loyal women, and assassins who died for their country. They were keen on cultivating immortals and had great respect for natural spirits. They believed that all things have spirituality and revered all the gods between heaven and earth. This inclusiveness was obvious in the art of the Han Dynasty, and Lu Xun also praised the profoundness of the art of the Han Dynasty.

For example, the yearning for immortality , the four mythical beasts of Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermillion Bird and Black Tortoise, the legends of Nuwa making clay figures, stone patching the sky, and the ancestor of heaven, earth and man, as well as the legends of Fuxi and Nuwa with human heads and snake bodies, the Jade Rabbit pounding medicine, the mythical beasts guarding the tripod, the Queen Mother of the West and the Queen Mother of the East, the nine-headed human -faced beast Kaimei , the three-legged crow, the nine-tailed fox, the Ganoderma lucidum, the Qilin, the feathered man and other mythical creatures and gods. To achieve immortality after death, the imaginative ancestors used mythical animals such as dragons, tigers and deer as riding tools for ascending to heaven.

Through the study of the politics, economy, history and culture of the Han Dynasty, the emergence and development of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is inseparable from the material conditions, institutional conditions and spiritual conditions at that time. The recovery and development of the economy provided the material basis for the emergence and development of the stone relief art. The development of agriculture, handicrafts and commerce promoted the progress of metallurgical technology. From the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty, people's tools transitioned from bronze to iron, and iron became an essential resource for war and formed a compulsory national system. During this period, social wealth accumulated in large quantities and the wealthy class emerged. The formation of the wealthy class and the pursuit of a luxurious lifestyle promoted the development of the stone relief art. These wealthy families were able to hire skilled craftsmen to carve stone

reliefs, decorate their tombs, and show their social status and wealth. Therefore, scenes such as banquets, entertainment, and hunting are often depicted on the stone reliefs, reflecting the lifestyle of the wealthy class.

The embryonic stage of stone relief art can be traced back to the Warring States Period (475 BC - 221 BC). During this period, conflicts between various countries led to the diversification and enrichment of tomb culture. Although stone reliefs from this period are rare, some preliminary examples of stone relief art appeared. These carvings were mainly used to decorate tombs, depicting mythological stories, religious ceremonies and scenes of daily life. The techniques used were relatively simple, mainly bas-relief and intaglio printing. The carvings were rough, but they already showed a certain artistry and symbolic meaning.

After the Warring States Period, the Qin Dynasty was also an important stage in the origin and development of early stone reliefs. The Qin Dynasty (221 BC-207 BC) was the first unified feudal dynasty in Chinese history. The Qin Dynasty ended the situation of the separatist rule of the princes for 500 years since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period and became the first centralized state in Chinese history. Under the background of the unification and centralized system of the Qin Dynasty, the art of stone reliefs has been further developed (Fu Jian. 2018).

Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD): The Han Dynasty was the peak period of stone relief art, with unprecedented artistic achievements and quantity. Stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty were mainly used in the tombs of nobles, depicting a wide range of themes, covering mythology, historical events, daily life and religious beliefs. The artistic expression of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty was more mature, the carving techniques were more refined, and the patterns were more complex. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties (220 AD - 420 AD), stone relief art continued to develop in the northern region. Although the number decreased, the techniques and styles remained at a high level.

Dynasties (AD 420-589 AD), the northern regimes were established one after

another, and the stone relief art continued to develop in the northern region. Especially under the rule of the Northern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties, the stone relief art gradually integrated with Buddhist art, and many stone carvings with Buddhist themes appeared. During this period, the stone relief art changed in artistic style, with smoother lines, more complex composition, and richer expression content. The influence of Buddhist art was particularly significant, and Buddha statues, Bodhisattva statues, and Buddhist stories became important themes of stone relief.

During the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581-907 AD), with the changes in social system and cultural environment, the form of tomb decoration changed, and stone reliefs were gradually replaced by epitaphs and murals (Shi Lei, 2018, p.78-79). Although the art of stone relief gradually declined, the artistic style and techniques of stone relief were still inherited in some areas, especially the cave art of the Tang Dynasty, such as the Dunhuang Grottoes and Longmen Grottoes, which inherited the techniques and style of the Han Dynasty stone relief art and showed a high level of artistic achievement.

During the Five Dynasties, Song and Yuan Dynasties (907-1368 AD) , the art of stone relief further declined, and tomb decorations were mainly epitaphs and murals. Stone relief art was no longer the mainstream form of decoration. During this period, China's art forms became more diverse and richer, and art forms such as painting, calligraphy, and porcelain achieved unprecedented development. However, the ancient art form of stone relief was gradually replaced by new art forms and eventually withdrew from the stage of history.

Taking the Han Dynasty as an example, the reasons for its decline are as follows:

Political factors Political turmoil, regime change, and policy shifts had a profound impact on the late Han Dynasty, especially the late Eastern Han Dynasty. Frequent social unrest such as the Yellow Turban Rebellion, the Dong Zhuo Rebellion, and the subsequent warlord struggles led to frequent regime changes and extremely unstable society. This turmoil not only disrupted people's lives and economic activities, but also

hindered many large-scale art projects. The relief stone, which requires a stable environment and many resources, gradually lost its conditions for survival in this turmoil. With the demise of the Han Dynasty and the beginning of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the new regime pursued different cultural policies and artistic preferences. The rulers of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties prioritized practicality and military defense rather than the construction of large-scale art projects. In addition, the new regime also had a new orientation in religion and culture, and the emphasis on the unique relief stone art form of the Han Dynasty gradually weakened.

Economic factors Economic recession and high production costs are important factors. At the end of the Han Dynasty, the economic situation deteriorated seriously due to long-term wars and social unrest. Agricultural production was interrupted, the heavy tax burden increased, and people's lives were difficult. In this economic context, resources were scarce, and large-scale production of stone reliefs was not realistic. Moreover, the production of stone reliefs required high-quality stone, superb carving technology, and many laborers, all of which required a large amount of financial investment. In times of economic prosperity, wealthy families and countries could afford these expenses, but in times of economic recession, the high production costs of stone reliefs became an obstacle to their continued development.

Social factors, changes in social structure and funeral customs also played a crucial role. The social structure underwent major changes at the end of the Han Dynasty, and the traditional aristocracy and large families gradually declined or disappeared. These classes were the main demanders and sponsors of stone reliefs, and their decline directly led to a decrease in the demand for stone reliefs. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, with the changes in funeral customs, the form of tombs gradually simplified. Brick chamber tombs and mural tombs gradually replaced stone relief tombs. These changes in funeral customs not only reflect changes in social and economic conditions, but also mark a shift in cultural concepts.

In terms of cultural factors, the transformation of cultural trends and religious influences played an important role. After the Han Dynasty, cultural tastes shifted from rough and realistic artistic styles to quiet and elegant aesthetic styles. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, literati's elegant theories and metaphysical thoughts prevailed, and they attached importance to the spiritual and conceptual expression of art, making realistic-style stone reliefs no longer popular. At the same time, with the spread and influence of Buddhism in China, Buddhist art gradually emerged and occupied an important position. Buddhist sculptures, murals and other forms gradually replaced traditional stone reliefs and became the new mainstream of art. The prosperity of Buddhist art also contributed to the decline of stone reliefs to a certain extent.

In addition, after the Han Dynasty, people's ideas about reincarnation also changed. In the past, people believed that the dead needed to live in the underworld for a period of time to obtain a better afterlife, so there were stone reliefs and brick carvings made for the dead in the underworld. However, at the end of the Han Dynasty, influenced by the sinicization of Buddhism, people believed that their ancestors could directly ascend to the paradise after death. Therefore, the post-Han society lost interest and necessity in making exquisite stone reliefs and brick carvings underground, and instead focused on creating brilliant Buddhist art on the ground. It is worth noting that the Dunhuang Grottoes art is an outstanding representative of Buddhist art during this period.

In terms of technical factors, the inheritance of technology was interrupted and new technologies emerged. Social unrest and regime change made it difficult to effectively inherit and develop the stone relief production technology. Many skilled craftsmen were displaced or lost their skills, resulting in the decline of the stone relief production technology. With the progress of society, new art technologies and forms such as murals and sculptures emerged, which have unique expressiveness and low production costs, gradually replacing stone reliefs and becoming the new mainstream of art.

Geographical factors also play an important role, especially in terms of resource

distribution and transportation. Stone relief requires high-quality stone, and the supply of stone varies from place to place. Social unrest and inconvenient transportation made high-quality stone increasingly difficult to obtain, thus limiting the production of stone relief. During the late Han Dynasty, Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, there was limited communication and exchange between regions, which further hindered the spread of culture and technology, and thus hindered the spread and development of stone relief art.

In summary, the decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art is the result of the complex interaction of multiple factors. Political turmoil and regime change caused an unstable social environment, economic downturn and high production costs made stone relief art unsustainable, changes in social structure and funeral customs reduced the demand for stone relief, cultural changes and religious influences changed artistic preferences, technological disruptions and the rise of new art forms gradually replaced stone relief, and geographical restrictions limited its development. These combined factors led to the gradual decline and disappearance of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

The discovery of stone relief art began during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) : The study of ancient inscriptions and stone carvings (known as epigraphy) became important. The Northern Song Dynasty placed particular emphasis on cultural prosperity, which led to a renewed interest in collecting bronzes and rubbings, which gave rise to epigraphy. Scholars and officials were keen on studying ancient texts and images and began to appreciate Han Dynasty stone reliefs and bricks.

Yuan and Ming Dynasties (1271-1644 AD): People's interest in epigraphy gradually waned, resulting in a decrease in the attention paid to Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Qing Dynasty (AD 1644-1911 AD): The rise of antiquarian studies reversed the decline of epigraphy during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Many famous Han dynasty stone reliefs and brick carvings were rediscovered or reinterpreted, rekindling interest in Han dynasty art. This revival was driven by scholars such as Ruan Yuan, Huang Yi,

and Weng Fanggang, who contributed to the development of epigraphy and the study of Han dynasty art.

Republic of China (1912-1949 AD): During this period, scholarly interest in ancient art and inscriptions continued, maintaining the momentum of the Qing dynasty.

The study of Han dynasty stone and brick portraits falls under the umbrella of epigraphy, a discipline that focuses on the study of inscriptions on ancient objects and rubbings. This interest began in the Song Dynasty, with significant contributions from scholars who valued the artistic and historical significance of these artifacts.

During the Republic of China period, society was in turmoil and wars were frequent, especially during the Anti-Japanese War. Many cultural heritages were destroyed, and Han Dynasty stone reliefs were not spared. Some important stone reliefs were stolen, destroyed or lost overseas, which brought great challenges to subsequent protection work. Due to wars and social unrest, the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art in the late Republic of China was once stagnant, and many academic plans failed to move forward.

The third stage, from the founding of the People's Republic of China to the present, from 1949 to the foreseeable future, this period is an unprecedented era of great transformation and reform, an era of great development and great change. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state attached great importance to archaeological work and organized many large-scale archaeological excavations. For example, the Wu Family Temple stone relief discovered in Jiaxiang, Shandong in 1956 was an important discovery during this period. Han Dynasty stone relief tombs in Xuzhou, Jiangsu, Nanyang, Henan and other places have been discovered one after another, providing rich materials for the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art. After the 1980s, with the development of archaeological technology, more Han Dynasty stone reliefs were discovered and studied. The Western Han Dynasty stone relief tomb discovered in Zoucheng, Shandong in 1981 revealed the new artistic style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Entering the 21st century, the application of modern

archaeological technology has made the discovery of Han Dynasty stone reliefs more systematic and scientific.

On December 14, 2021, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, emphasized in his speech at the 11th National Congress of the Chinese Writers Association and the 10th National Congress of the Chinese Artists Association that "culture makes the country prosperous and culture makes the country strong". Contemporary China is magnificent, the people are heroic, and the future is bright. The times have provided an unprecedented broad stage for the prosperity and development of our country's literature and art. It is the unshirkable responsibility and major responsibility of literary and art workers to promote the prosperity and development of socialist literature and art and build a socialist cultural power (Yao Yichun, 2023 p.36-38).

As an important part of Chinese traditional culture, Han Dynasty stone relief art carries the glorious historical achievements of the Han Dynasty, records the grand social civilization of the Han Dynasty, depicts the panoramic life scenes of the Han Dynasty, embodies the cultural essence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in Chinese cultural history, and is a typical representative of China's excellent traditional culture. Contemporary literary and art workers and researcher should conduct practical research on this art form to make it reflect its due value in the contemporary era. This is the significance and value of research!

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 To study and analyze the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art

1.2.2 To study and analyze the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

1.2.3 To study and analyze the aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

1.2.4 To study and analyze the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art.

1.3 Research Question

1.3.1 What are the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art?

1.3.2 What is the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art and how is it manifested?

1.3.3 What are the aesthetic levels of Han Dynasty stone relief art? How are this aesthetics presented in Han Dynasty stone relief art?

1.3.4 What artistic influences does the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty have on contemporary Chinese art creation? How are these artistic influences manifested?

1.4 Definition Of Terms

1.4.1 Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art

The concept of "portrait" is common in many Songs Dynasty epigraphic documents and works. For example, Zhao Mingcheng's "Jinshi Lu" specifically lists the category of "portrait" and records the Han family's stone chamber portraits. In addition, Hong Shi's "Li Zhi" and "Li Xu" and "Bao Ke" and other compilations also have the concept of "portrait". When studying "class changes", Song Dynasty scholars repeatedly used the term "portrait" to refer to Han Dynasty stone carvings and stele inscriptions. This usage continued until the Ming and Qing Dynasties and is still widely used in the fields of archaeology and art history.

In fact, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are stone carvings in underground tombs, ancestral halls and other buildings. Most of these buildings are related to funeral ceremonies. Therefore, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is essentially a sacrificial funeral art. The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty combines sculpture and painting, based on vivid realism and imaginative, and fully reflects the social system, culture, economy, customs, beliefs and other aspects of the Han Dynasty. The diversity and richness of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, combined with historical documents, provides valuable insights into the Han Dynasty society.

The aesthetic value of Han Dynasty stone relief art has profound enlightenment significance for contemporary Chinese art creation. It embodies the purest pursuit of the Han national spirit and is closely aligned with the core values of the Chinese nation. It not only enriches contemporary art creation, but also provides a direction rooted in cultural heritage for the cultural revival of the Chinese nation.

1.4.2 Cultural Value

The definition of the concept of cultural value covers many aspects. Broad culture includes all spiritual and material wealth created by human beings in social practice, representing "great culture". Narrow culture only covers spiritual wealth, usually referring to the spiritual civilization part. This paper adopts the concept of broad culture because material and spiritual culture are closely related. Especially when studying the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, this broad perspective helps to fully explore and utilize cultural resources.

Value is the standard for evaluating whether something is meaningful, and it is subjective, diverse and dynamic.

From the perspective of value form, in contemporary China, traditional culture has material value, spiritual value and communication value. First, material value. On the one hand, the clothing, food, architecture, utensils, etc. in traditional culture can directly meet people's material needs in terms of clothing, food, housing, transportation, and use. On the other hand, the ideas of governing the country, values, development concepts, literature and art in traditional culture can serve the production of material resources and indirectly play the material value of culture. Second, spiritual value. Among people's basic needs, the need for truth-seeking, goodness, and aesthetics is an important spiritual need. The profound philosophical thoughts, ethical concepts, literature and art in traditional culture can provide rich and precious spiritual food for people's truth-seeking, goodness, and aesthetics today. Third, communication value. People live in social relations, and the satisfaction of people's material and spiritual needs cannot be separated from the premise of communication, so people have the need

for communication. Some ethical norms, etiquette and customs, legal systems, etc. in traditional culture can help people deal with the relationship between people and the relationship between people and society, thereby providing important reference and inspiration for establishing a harmonious, fair, and reasonable social order.

1.4.3 Aesthetics

Aesthetics originated from Greek and German and was proposed by Baumgarten in 1750. It mainly studies aesthetic activities, that is, the aesthetic relationship between people and the world. It is a spiritual and cultural activity. Aesthetics not only studies art, but also involves categories such as beauty, ugliness, and sublimity, focusing on the relationship between people and beauty. Scholars believe that aesthetics is not only a doctrine about "beauty", but should be understood as "philosophy of art", focusing on the imagination and creativity of works of art.

The history of aesthetics in the West can be traced back to the time of Plato, while China's aesthetic tradition began to develop in the pre-Qin period. Lao Tzu, Confucius and others laid the foundation of Taoist and Confucian aesthetics, which influenced later generations.

Chinese aesthetics has experienced many developments, from Liang Qichao and others introducing Western aesthetics to Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua promoting the integration of Chinese and Western aesthetics. Contemporary aesthetics has experienced two upsurges and emphasizes the integration of Chinese and Western cultures.

1.4.4 Contemporary Chinese Aesthetics

Contemporary Chinese aesthetics is a discipline that has gradually developed since the reform and opening up, along with the changes in social economy, culture and thought. It not only inherits the aesthetic tradition of the Chinese nation, but also engages in dialogue and integration with the world's aesthetic thoughts, forming an aesthetic system with Chinese characteristics.

Different from traditional aesthetics, contemporary Chinese aesthetics pays more

attention to the reflection of social reality and the exploration of cultural identity. At the same time, it also emphasizes how to maintain its own cultural independence and originality in the dialogue with Western aesthetic thoughts in the context of globalization.

Contemporary Chinese aesthetics is largely influenced by traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. These ideas are reinterpreted in contemporary aesthetics to explore aesthetic issues in modern life. While absorbing and learning from Western aesthetic thoughts, contemporary Chinese aesthetics always maintains reflection and innovation on its own culture, striving to make a "Chinese voice" in the context of globalization and form an aesthetic theory system with global influence.

When analyzing works of art, a hierarchical structure is usually adopted, such as material, form, and content. Chinese scholar Ye Lang proposed a more suitable classification method for analyzing Han Dynasty stone relief art, which is divided into carving technology, artistic form, and work content. Combining traditional Chinese aesthetics can better understand these works of art.

1.4.5 Chinese Contemporary Art

China's contemporary art has its own periodization standards. In recent years, the Chinese art critics have basically reached a consensus on the time node of China's contemporary art, which is the late 1970s and early 1980s, or more precisely 1978, because in December of that year, the Communist Party of China held the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, which decided to shift the focus of the party's work from "class struggle" to "economic development". From then on, my country entered a new historical period of reform and opening up and modernization.

Chinese contemporary art mainly refers to the art forms that have innovated, subverted previous norms and have avant-garde characteristics in the art field since 1978. Chinese contemporary art mainly refers to the field with visual art as the core, such as painting, sculpture, installation art, video art, etc.

Boris believes that "contemporary can be understood as 'comrades of time' - cooperation with time" mainly focuses on the present, and contemporary art focuses on artistic phenomena and artistic concepts that are happening at the moment. From the perspective of time, Chinese contemporary art should be the art of the era closest to us, and can reflect the humanistic spirit of the era we are experiencing. In other words, contemporary art is to witness the changes in contemporary society together with contemporary people, and to participate in the construction of contemporary culture. It is an artistic trend with a sense of cultural mission and keen visual insight. Contemporary art is also an art that is constantly updated and leads to the future.

1.4.6 Artistic Influence

The concept of artistic influence is used to describe the various effects that artworks or art forms have on individuals, groups or societies. These effects can be emotional, intellectual, cultural, and even extend to social and political levels. Artistic influence includes the multifaceted impact and results of art on audiences, society, culture and other art forms. Understanding artistic influence not only helps us appreciate the deeper meaning of artworks, but also helps us recognize the important role of art in social change and cultural inheritance. Through in-depth research on artistic influence, we can better understand the power and value of art, as well as its unique contribution to shaping human society and culture.

1.5 Research Scope

1.5.1 Research Arer

(1) Scope of research on Han Dynasty stone relief art

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is a comprehensive art form that reflects the political, economic, cultural and even folk art of the time. The emergence of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is by no means accidental. It is neither a sudden whim of craftsmen in a certain region nor a unique expression of the art form of a certain region. Instead, it is diverse in form, extensive, expressive and aesthetic. Therefore, the

study of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty cannot be limited to a certain region, but requires a broad historical perspective, relying on archaeological evidence and documentary evidence, and conducting a comprehensive exploration through historical sociology and art research. This study focuses on five regions: Shandong Province, Henan Province , Jiangsu Province, Shanxi Province, Sichuan Province and other regions. The stone reliefs sporadically discovered in other regions are not included in the scope of the study because of their limited number and lack of representativeness.

(2) As an analytical unit for the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art, I selected relatively important art schools, painting academies, exhibition halls, and representative artist studios in China for investigation and research.

1.5.2 Timing range

(1) Starting from the Han Dynasty, the origin of relief stone art in the Han Dynasty, the Han Dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD) is a dynasty that emerged after the Qin Dynasty in Chinese history. It is divided into the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC - 8 AD) and the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 AD - 220 AD), which are called the Two Han Dynasties.

(2) Chinese contemporary art creation from China's reform and opening up to today (1978 -- 2024).

1.6 Research Methodology

This research is pure or basic research. It uses qualitative research methods. The research results are presented in descriptive analysis. Photographs and graphics are assembled. The details of the research process are as follows.

1.6.1 Population and Sample

1.6.1.1 Key Information Providers

(1) Yang Aiguo is the research director of Shandong Provincial Museum. He graduated from the Department of History of Shandong University in 1984 with a major in archaeology. His main research direction is the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art

and ancient tomb murals. His academic works include "The Realm of Light and Shadow: A Study on the Chronology of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs", "Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs and Brick Reliefs", "Zhu Wei Stone Chamber", "Xiaotangshan Stone Niche", "Han Dynasty Stone Relief Tomb in Wubai Village, Linyi", etc. His research papers have been published in journals such as "Archaeology", "Antiquities", "Chinese History Research", "Literature, History and Philosophy", etc.

(2) Zhu Cunming is a professor at Jiangsu Normal University, a doctor, and the director of the Institute of Chinese Culture. He is also the vice president of the Chinese Han Painting Society, a director of the Sino-Foreign Comparative Literature and Art Theory Research Association, and the chief expert of a major project of the National Social Science Fund.

(3) Liu Hui, born in Xiaoxian County, Anhui Province in 1965, is currently the president of the Xiaoxian Han Painting Research Association. He studied under the famous sinologist Feng Qiyong and writer Wang Yongyan and focused on the study of Han paintings. Through extensive observation of Han paintings, he proposed theories such as "theory of the main figures in Han paintings", "theory of three-dimensional time and space composition in Han paintings", and "theory of astronomical phenomena in Han paintings", which expanded new perspectives and paths for the study of Han paintings.

(4) Sun Xun was born in Majiang County, Guizhou Province in 1970. In 1990, he graduated from the Affiliated Middle School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 1994, he graduated from the First Studio of the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts with a bachelor's degree. In 1996, he graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, studied under Mr. Jin Shangyi, and obtained a master's degree. He taught at the Affiliated Middle School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 2004, he completed the first advanced oil painting training class of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and served as the executive vice principal of the Affiliated Middle School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 2007,

he graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, studied under Mr. Jin Shangyi and Mr. Shao Dazhen, and obtained the first practical doctorate degree. He is currently teaching at the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, a professor and doctoral supervisor, and a director and member of the Art Committee of the Chinese Oil Painting Society. Professor Sun Xun not only has a very high level of Western painting, but also has a deep understanding of the Han Dynasty stone relief art. He once said that he had two "highlight" moments, one was when he saw Francesca's murals in Italy, and the other was when he saw the Han Dynasty stone relief art.

(5) Lei Bo was born in Guangxi in 1965. He graduated from Guangxi Arts Institute in 1991 and completed his studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1996.

He graduated from the 8th Oil Painting Assistant Training Class in 2002. He worked in the Guangxi Artists Association from 1991 to 2007. He has worked in the Beijing Academy of Fine Arts since 2007. He was the deputy secretary-general, secretary-general, vice chairman, executive vice chairman, and chairman of the Guangxi Artists Association, vice president and party secretary of the Beijing Academy of Fine Arts. He is currently the vice president of the China Oil Painting Society, executive director of the Beijing Academy of Fine Arts Art Committee, vice chairman of the Beijing Artists Association, honorary chairman of the Guangxi Artists Association, honorary president of the Guangxi Painting and Calligraphy Academy, director of the China Artists Association, and a national first-class artist. Mr. Lei is the vice president of the China Oil Painting Society and is good at oil painting. At the same time, he also has a strong interest in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. In his paintings, we can see the influence of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty on his art.

(6) Lu Long, from Xingtang, Hebei, is a contemporary Chinese printmaker. He is currently a professor at Hebei Academy of Fine Arts, a member of the Chinese Artists Association, a national first-class artist, and vice chairman of the Shijiazhuang Artists Association. Professor Lu is a representative figure of contemporary Chinese printmaking. He often says that he was influenced by the artistic modeling of Han

Dynasty stone reliefs, which made his prints full of tension.

Tan Haonan, a famous contemporary Chinese printmaker, is a Manchu, born in Longhua County, Chengde, Hebei Province. He is a member of the Printmaking Art Committee of the Chinese Artists Association, Vice Chairman of the Hebei Artists Association, Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Committee of the China Cultural Promotion Association, Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of the China Cultural Promotion Association, Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of the Hebei Academy of Painting, Master's tutor and professor of Shijiazhuang Tiedao University. He has held many personal black and white woodcut print exhibitions. His print works have just been selected for the 14th China National Art Exhibition and have been qualified to enter Beijing.

1.6.1.2 Practical Information Providers

(1) Staff at the Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, including guides, restorers and managers, etc.

(2) Han Dynasty stone relief art enthusiasts and Han Dynasty stone relief art rubbing collectors

(3) Chinese contemporary artists, painters from art academies, and freelance artists

(4) Chinese contemporary art critics and exhibition planners

(5) Teachers at Chinese higher art colleges, including creative instructors and art history teachers

1.6.1.3 General Information Sources

(1) Residents living near the Han Dynasty Stone Relief Site and the Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum

(2) Visitors, people who visit relief stone museums and contemporary art exhibitions

(3) This study collected and photographed more than 100 Han Dynasty stone relief art photos that could provide information for this study.

1.6.2 Instrumentation

1.6.2.1 Interview forms for fieldwork, questionnaires for analysis of materials.

1.6.2.2 Tools used to record audio and video, i.e., video cameras, recorders, etc.

1.6.2.3 Notebook for field research notes.

1.6.3 Data Collection

1.6.3.1Fieldwork

(1) Interviews: The researcher used formal interviews, informal interviews, focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, and general interviews in my field research. They interviewed staff of the Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Exhibition Hall, managers of the Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Site, local residents of the Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Site , visitors to the Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Exhibition Hall , scholars of Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art , and lovers of Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art . The researcher visited the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Exhibition Hall, the Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Exhibition Hall, the Xuzhou Han Dynasty Stone Carving Art Exhibition Hall, the Shandong Provincial Museum, the Sichuan Museum, and other places, and obtained a large amount of first-hand information.

(2) Looking for collectors of Han Dynasty stone relief art rubbings and seeking more information

(3) Visit the Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition and look for works and artists influenced by the Han Dynasty stone relief art.

1.6.3.2 Documentary Data Collection

To collect data by reviewing the literature. The documentary data from research, magazines, documentaries from local government, etc.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative research methods, the three main concepts in my research are cultural value, aesthetics and artistic influence. This paper first collected and read literature, sorted out the relevant information on the development process of Han Dynasty stone

relief art and the current status of contemporary Chinese art creation.

First, by visiting the Han Dynasty stone relief museum and collecting relevant documents, we understand the social background of the Han Dynasty stone relief art . Then, we use the concept of cultural value to analyze the cultural value contained in the Han Dynasty stone relief art, and how these cultural values are reflected through the carrier of Han Dynasty stone relief art. Then, we use the concept of aesthetics to have a deeper understanding of its artistic value. Finally, using the concept of artistic influence, through the comparison of typical works, and visiting art schools , painting academies and artist studios, we understand in detail the creative process of art school teachers and artists, analyze the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief on their creation, and the specific application of stone relief aesthetics in their creative process. Finally, according to the outline of each chapter of the paper, the materials are sorted out in detail, and interpreted and analyzed using research concepts and theories.

1.6.5 Research presentation

1.6.5.1 Thesis: Descriptive Analysis and Pictures (Full paper).

1.6.5.2 Research article: Published in the Thai Journal Citation Index group database,2 papers.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Literature Review on Research Text

Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art literature review

(1) Current status of Chinese research

The religious elements in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty have always been the focus of academic research. Scholars believe that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty not only reflect the religious belief system of the time, but also reflect the important role of religion in daily life. For example, Wang Minghui (2015) analyzed the mythological and immortal images in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in his book "Han Dynasty Stone Relief and Religious Beliefs", revealing the Han people's

belief and pursuit of the afterlife. By comparing the stone reliefs from different regions and tombs, the book reveals the profound influence of Confucianism, Taoism and early Buddhism on the artistic creation of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty (Wang Minghui ,2015, p36-38).

In addition, the study found that the frequent appearance of gods, ghosts, fairyland and other images in the stone reliefs reflects the Han people's pursuit of the immortality of the soul and eternal life. For example, the "ascension map" and "feathered people" in the tombs express people's desire for ascension and eternal life after death. The widespread presence of Taoist elements in the stone reliefs shows that Taoist thought has penetrated into the hearts of the Han people and has become a part of their daily beliefs.

As a visual cultural carrier, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty vividly records the daily life and customs of the society at that time. In "A Study on the Image of Social Life in the Stone Relief Art of the Han Dynasty", Liu Hongmei (2012) reconstructed various aspects of agricultural production, commercial trade, family life, etc. in the Han Dynasty society through a systematic analysis of the unearthed stone reliefs (Liu Hongmei,2012, p36-37).

The images of farming, hunting, weaving, etc. in the relief stone reflect the production, labor and life scenes of the people in the Han Dynasty. These images not only provide rich historical information, but also help scholars understand the economic model and social structure of the Han Dynasty. For example, by analyzing the market scenes in the relief stone, scholars found that commercial activities were quite developed at that time, and the market was an important economic and social hub.

At the same time, the images of festivals, weddings and funerals in the relief stone also reflect the customs and social etiquette of the Han Dynasty. Studying these images can help us understand the lifestyle, social etiquette and family structure of the time. For example, the "singing and dancing pictures" and "banquet pictures" in the relief stone depict the entertainment activities and food culture of the Han Dynasty, showing

the lifestyle and cultural atmosphere of the society at that time.

Some studies believe that stone reliefs reflect the political system and etiquette of the Han Dynasty. In his book "Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art and Political Etiquette", Li Jianguo (2010) explored the role of stone reliefs in promoting ruling ideas and regulating social behavior through image analysis. The images of emperors, officials, and military commanders in the stone reliefs reveal the political structure and power system of the Han Dynasty (Li Jianguo, 2010, p.118-120).

Through the study of political and ritual scenes in stone reliefs, scholars have found that stone reliefs not only record political activities, but also convey the importance of social hierarchy and etiquette in the country. For example, the "audience scenes" and "inspection scenes" in the stone reliefs reflect the majesty of the emperor and the loyalty of officials and embody the hierarchy and ruling ideology of Han Dynasty society.

In addition, the legal and criminal images in the stone reliefs also provide useful insights into the legal system and judicial practice of the Han Dynasty. By studying the "sentencing pictures" and "punishment pictures" in the stone reliefs, scholars have found that the legal system of the Han Dynasty was quite complete, and the judicial procedures were relatively rigorous. These images not only reflect the legal system at that time, but also reflect the idea that the Han Dynasty society attached importance to the rule of law and severely punished crimes.

The plastic arts of Han Dynasty stone relief art is an important manifestation of its aesthetic value. In his article "Plastic Arts of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" (Wu Jianhua ,2013, p.67), Wu Jianhua made a detailed analysis of the style characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art, including the depiction techniques of figures, animals, buildings, etc., highlighting the high realism and symbolism of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

The characters on the stone reliefs, whether they are emperors, officials, soldiers, or farmers, all show a high degree of realism. This realism is not only reflected in the

accurate portrayal of the characters, but also in the details of their movements, expressions, clothing, etc. For example, the "farming picture" on the stone relief vividly depicts the scene of farmers working in the fields, vividly showing the farmers' labor and life.

Similarly, the images of animals such as horses, cows, and sheep are also highly realistic and symbolic. These animals are not only necessities of the social economy of the Han Dynasty, but also have rich symbolic meanings. For example, horses often symbolize bravery and strength, while cows represent diligence and wealth.

The composition styles of Han Dynasty stone relief art are diverse, with strong narrative and decorative characteristics. Zhang Lili discussed the composition characteristics and artistic style of Han Dynasty stone relief art in "Research on the Composition of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" (Zhang Lili ,2011,p.189-190), and believed that it focused on clear layers, reasonable spatial layout, and strong artistry.

The composition often uses a sense of layering, organically combining different scenes and characters. For example, in the Banquet, the main characters are in the foreground, while the attendants and musicians are in the back, with clear layers and distinct levels, showing the liveliness and joy of the banquet.

In addition, the composition also pays great attention to the use of space and the coherence of scenes. For example, "The Governor-General" depicts the scene of the emperor's inspection tour. The characters, carriages, and buildings are integrated into a complete picture, highlighting the majesty and magnificence of the emperor and the governor-general.

The carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art are also an important aspect of its aesthetic value. In "A Brief Analysis of the Carving Techniques of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" (2014), Chen Xiaodong analyzed the production techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art, revealing that the production techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art were advanced and diverse (Chen Xiaodong,2014,p.28-29).

The main carving techniques include high relief, shallow relief, line carving, etc.

These techniques not only reflect the superb skills of Han Dynasty craftsmen, but also produce different artistic effects. For example, high relief is mostly used to depict people and animals, emphasizing the three-dimensional sense and sense of space; shallow relief is mostly used to depict the details of buildings and objects, emphasizing the flatness and decorativeness; line carving is mostly used to depict clothing patterns and decorative patterns, emphasizing the smoothness and fineness of lines.

In addition, the carving techniques focus on detail depiction and texture expression. For example, the characters on the stone portraits not only have facial expressions and movements, but the folds of their clothes and textures are also depicted very finely, reflecting the craftsmen's attention to details and superb carving skills.

(2) Current status of overseas research

Western scholars have conducted in-depth research on the religious and mythological elements in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, revealing the complexity of the religious beliefs and mythological stories of the Han people. In his book Art of the Han Dynasty in China (Edward Schaeffer, 1980), Edward Schaeffer analyzed the stone reliefs of the Wu Family Ancestral Hall and explored the polytheism and mythological narratives in the religious beliefs of the Han people. Schaeffer pointed out that the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty not only reflects Confucianism and Taoism, but also incorporates local folk beliefs and early Buddhist elements. The mythological stories depicted in the stone reliefs, such as Fuxi and Nuwa creating humans and Houyi shooting the sun, express awe of nature and reflect the religious atmosphere of Han society.

Some Western scholars pay attention to the social life reflected in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty and believe that they are important materials for studying the social history of the Han Dynasty. Mary Sheehan reconstructed the daily life scenes of Han Dynasty society through meticulous image analysis in "Images of Daily Life in Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" (Mary Sheehan, 1995, p.225-226). She pointed out that the market, banquet and hunting scenes in the stone reliefs not only show the daily life

of the Han people, but also provide valuable information about social structure and economic activities. For example, the bustling trade scenes and diverse commodities in the market images show that commercial activities in the Han Dynasty were quite developed.

In Wuliang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Painting (Wu Hung, 1992 p.22-23), Wu Hung used symbolism to deeply analyze the symbolic meaning of stone reliefs. Wu Hung believed that the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty was not only a decoration, but also a manifestation of the ideology and values of the Han Dynasty society. Wu Hung revealed the profound cultural connotations behind these images by studying the symbolic elements in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, such as mythical creatures such as dragons and phoenixes, as well as various ritual scenes. He believed that the symbolic meaning in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty reflected the social hierarchy and power structure and conveyed the moral values and aesthetic ideals of the time.

In his book Decoration of Han Tombs in Shandong Province, China (Kane, 1985, p.145-147), Kaneno Seiichi conducted a formal aesthetic analysis of the stone reliefs, emphasizing their uniqueness in composition, lines, colors, etc. Kaneno Seiichi believes that the composition of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty focuses on the harmony of the overall layout, the proportion and appropriateness of the arrangement of elements, and creates a rhythmic visual effect. In addition, he also pointed out that the lines of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty are smooth and powerful, which not only expresses the dynamic beauty of people and animals, but also enhances the decorativeness of the images.

"The Origin of Wu's Ancestral Hall Architecture" (Fein, 1998, p.127-128), Fein analyzed the stone reliefs of Wu's Ancestral Hall, revealing the superb achievements of Han Dynasty stone relief art in carving technology and artistic expression. Fein pointed out that the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art are diverse, including high relief, shallow relief, line carving, etc., all of which reflect the superb skills and

artistic creativity of craftsmen. He particularly emphasized the realism and symbolism in the depiction of people and animals, believing that these images not only accurately reflect the daily life scenes of Han Dynasty society, but also convey rich cultural significance.

Some scholars have studied the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on the art of other East Asian countries. David Kilburn (2005, p.58-59) pointed out in his book "The Influence of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art on Ancient Japanese Art" through comparative research that Han Dynasty stone relief art had a profound influence on the sculpture art of the Nara period in Japan. Kilburn pointed out that many sculptures in the Nara period in Japan clearly reflected the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art in terms of subject matter, composition and technique. For example, the decorative patterns on the stone coffins of the Kofun period in Japan are quite similar to the images on the Han Dynasty stone relief art, indicating that there was a deep cultural exchange between these regions.

Western scholars often compare Han Dynasty stone relief art with art forms from other cultures. Christopher Bell, in his study "A Comparative Study of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art and Ancient Roman Relief Art", explored the similarities and differences between the two in terms of artistic techniques and styles. Bell pointed out that Han Dynasty stone relief art and ancient Roman relief art have many similarities in function and subject matter, but there are significant differences in artistic style. Han Dynasty stone relief art emphasizes realism and symbolism, while ancient Roman relief art focuses more on drama and dynamics. This comparative study not only reveals the unique characteristics of each culture's art, but also helps scholars better understand artistic creation in different cultural backgrounds. (Christopher Bell, 2011, p177_178).

The above literature provides some help for this article, but we need to summarize and explore the historical status of Han Dynasty stone relief art in Chinese and foreign art. While studying the general laws of Han Dynasty stone relief art, we should also focus on studying the regional characteristics and causes of the Han Dynasty stone relief

art, and summarize its individual characteristics from the perspectives of culture, aesthetics, and art. We should fully understand the connotation of the work. Because Han Dynasty stone relief art is not only a work of art, but also a carrier of Han Dynasty society, culture, thought, and values. Through multi-faceted analysis, we can more comprehensively understand the social and cultural significance behind it.

There are several important reasons for studying and analyzing the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs from the perspectives of culture, aesthetics, and the impact on contemporary Chinese art:

First, we need to find the cultural roots of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only works of art, but also symbols of the social culture of the Han Dynasty. From a cultural perspective, we can reveal how these works of art reflect the social values, religious beliefs and lifestyles of the time. This analysis helps us understand the deep meaning of Han Dynasty stone reliefs as a carrier of historical culture.

Second, through the analysis of aesthetics, we can reveal the aesthetic ideas reflected in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, including the treatment of lines, composition, modeling, and the expression of reality and ideals. This helps us understand the unique understanding and pursuit of beauty by the Han people, and thus provides a richer perspective for appreciating these works of art.

Third, reveal the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation. Han Dynasty stone relief is not only a representative work of ancient art, but also has a profound artistic influence on contemporary Chinese art creation. By analyzing its artistic influence on contemporary art, we can see how traditional art interacts with modern creation to promote the development of contemporary Chinese art. This analysis helps to summarize the inspiration and reference significance of historical art heritage for contemporary creation.

Fourth, summarizing from multiple aspects such as culture, aesthetics and contemporary influence can provide a three-dimensional and multi-dimensional

research framework, so that the study of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is no longer limited to a single art form, but covers its comprehensive influence at different levels. This helps to enrich the content and methods of art history research.

Finally, by analyzing the influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs on contemporary creation, it can provide a source of inspiration for contemporary artists. Understanding the individual characteristics of these ancient works of art can help contemporary artists find ways to communicate with tradition in their creations, thereby creating works with a sense of the times while maintaining cultural heritage.

In general, summarizing the individual characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art from many aspects can not only help us understand its historical value and artistic charm more comprehensively, but also reveal its lasting influence on contemporary art, thus providing important academic support and creative inspiration for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese art.

1.7.2 Literature review on research concepts

1.7.2.1 Literature review on “cultural values”

The book "The Importance of Culture: How Values Affect Human Progress" edited by Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison is a book that deeply explores the role of culture in human progress. This book explores cultural issues from several aspects, including culture and economic development, culture and political development, culture and gender, culture and American minorities, the Asian crisis and promoting change.

In terms of culture and economic development, the book reveals how culture affects a country's economic development and how economic development in turn affects culture. For example, Costa Rica's enthusiasm for ecology, the United States' obsession with convenience, Japan's love of games and cartoons, etc., these cultural characteristics are not only conducive to productivity, but also become a country's unique competitive advantage.

In terms of culture and political development, this book explores the relationship

between culture and democracy, and the role of culture in the process of democratization. Research shows that societies that emphasize self-expression values are more likely to develop into democratic societies. In terms of culture and gender, this book discusses the relationship between culture, gender and human rights, and the role of culture in gender equality and minority issues.

In terms of culture and American minorities, this book explores how culture affects the economic and social status of American minorities. In terms of promoting change, this book explores the importance of cultural change and how to deal with cultural change (Samuel Huntington Lawrence Harrison, 2010.p14-19).

Pointed out in his book "The Contemporary Value of China's Excellent Traditional Culture" that cultural value is a kind of relationship, which contains two aspects of stipulation: on the one hand, there is an object that can meet a cultural need. On the other hand, there is a subject with cultural needs. When a certain subject finds an object that can meet its cultural needs and possesses this object in some way, a cultural value relationship emerges.

Cultural value is a social product. It cannot be understood as a property of things that meet individual cultural needs. People are not only the demanders of cultural value, but also the bearers of cultural value. Cultural value always serves people. Things that are not needed by humans do not have cultural value. At the same time, cultural value is created by people. Whether it is people's cultural needs or cultural products that meet such needs, they can only be formed in people's social practice. People's ability to create cultural needs and cultural products is also cultural value in itself, and it is the most essential cultural value. Any social form has its own unique cultural needs, which can only be met by such activities.

From the perspective of value form, in contemporary China, the excellent traditional Chinese culture has material value, spiritual value and communication value. First, material value. On the one hand, the clothing, food, architecture, utensils, etc. in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can directly meet people's material needs in

terms of clothing, food, housing, transportation, and use. On the other hand, the ideas of governing the country, values, development concepts, literature and art in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can serve the production of material resources and indirectly play the material value of culture. Second, spiritual value. Among people's basic needs, the need for truth-seeking, goodness, and aesthetics is an important spiritual need. The profound philosophical thoughts, ethical concepts, literature and art in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can provide rich and precious spiritual food for people today to seek truth, goodness, and aesthetics. Third, the value of communication. People live in social relations, and the satisfaction of people's material and spiritual needs cannot be separated from the premise of communication, so people have the need for communication. Some ethical norms, etiquette and customs, and legal systems in China's excellent traditional culture can help people deal with the relationship between people and the relationship between people and society, thus providing important reference and inspiration for establishing a harmonious, fair and reasonable social order (Zhao Kun, 2019, p87-88)

In his book "Cultural Value Theory", Sun Meitang pointed out that value is not a natural relationship between things that has always existed in nature, but it is created because of people. All things have a good or bad meaning to people from the perspective of people, and all phenomena that people always have to spend a lot of time to judge, weigh, and choose to belong to value. Value is a world centered on people, which is formed and made for people through social practice. (Sun Meitang , 2005 , p.36-38)

Shan Shilian discussed the research on the external communication of Chinese cultural values in his book "Speaking to the World: The Communication of Chinese Cultural Values", mainly discussing how to effectively communicate Chinese cultural values to the outside world. This involves two main aspects: the external communication of culture and art and the construction of a foreign discourse system.

This book also discusses in depth the construction and significance of the Chinese

discourse system, mainly involving how to build a discourse system that not only reflects Chinese values but can also be understood and accepted by the international community. This system needs to include the integration of national discourse and foreign discourse, and it must have both Chinese characteristics and a global perspective (Shan Shilian, 2024, p.55-57).

Through the analysis of the above literature and the characteristics of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, it is concluded that the study of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty needs to be explored from three levels: material, spiritual and communication. First, the material level covers the artistic style, carving techniques, image symbols, etc. of the stone reliefs. These elements not only show the skills and aesthetic pursuits of the craftsmen of the Han Dynasty, but also reflect the social structure, economic level and cultural exchanges at that time. Through the study of these material cultural heritages, we can better understand the productivity, technical level and historical background of artistic creation in the Han Dynasty society. Secondly, the spiritual level involves the ethical concepts, religious beliefs and philosophical thoughts contained in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. These connotations are vividly reflected in the theme selection, image design and narrative method of the stone reliefs. The common themes of filial piety, loyalty, blessing, etc. in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty reflect the core values of the society at that time, and show people's belief in supernatural powers, the continuation of ancestor worship and the pursuit of ethics and morality. These spiritual connotations not only shaped the lifestyle of the Han people, but also left a profound impact on the cultural inheritance of later generations. Thirdly, the communication value is reflected in the function of the stone reliefs in social communication and clan relations, such as its role in sacrifice, rituals and family relations. In the Han Dynasty, stone reliefs were not only works of art, but also important tools for maintaining social relations and conveying etiquette norms. By analyzing these communicative values, we can better understand how Han Dynasty society used visual art to strengthen social order and consolidate clan ties.

Therefore, through the study of the three levels of material, spiritual and communication combined with the broad concept of culture, we can fully reveal the multiple values of Han Dynasty stone relief art and help us more deeply understand its important position in history and cultural heritage. Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, such as combining archaeology, art history and religious studies, we can more systematically explore the cultural connotation of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, thereby revealing its special significance in the development of Chinese culture and its influence on later generations. This kind of research not only helps to enrich our understanding of Han Dynasty culture, but also provides valuable historical resources and inspiration for contemporary cultural innovation.

1.7.2.2 Literature review on “aesthetics”

There have been too many discussions on aesthetics over the past thousands of years. Some scholars have sorted out their views and divided them into two categories: one is to explain the essence of beauty from the objective attributes and characteristics of things, and the other is to explain the essence of beauty from the perspective of spiritual ontology and subjective psychology.

Aristotle believed that the main forms of beauty are "order, symmetry and clarity", and defined beauty from the relational structure of form. (Aristotle, 1997).

British aesthetician Burke said: "Beauty is mostly a property of objects, which acts mechanically on people's minds through the medium of the senses. Therefore, we should carefully study how those properties that can be perceived by the senses and that arouse love and corresponding emotions are arranged in our experience." According to his own research, he believes that beauty is caused by the following characteristics of objects: small, smooth, with changes in each part, no edges and corners, delicate, and bright but not strong colors. Objects with these characteristics will inevitably attract people's love, and they will not change due to subjective willfulness. (Burke, 1980, p.356-358)

There are two ways to explain the essence of beauty from the perspective of

spiritual ontology and subjective psychology. One is to explain the essence of beauty from the perspective of objective spiritual ontology. The most representative one is Plato's theory of "beauty is the idea" mentioned above. Later, Hegel defined beauty as "beauty is the sensual manifestation of the idea." This is the line inherited from Plato (Hegel, 1958, p.32)

In the book "Introduction to Art Studies", published by Peking University Press, the researcher Peng Jixiang wrote: "The traditional Chinese aesthetic system is very large, but the greatest influence on the formation of Chinese traditional culture is still Taoist aesthetics, Confucian aesthetics and Zen aesthetics. It is the aesthetic thoughts of these three systems that constitute the traditional Chinese aesthetics. (Peng Jixiang , 2006, P13)".

In the book Principles of Aesthetics, Peking University Press (2009), researcher Ye Lang wrote: “The aesthetics of Laozi, Confucius, Yi Zhuan, and Zhuangzi laid the foundation for the development of Chinese classical aesthetics (Ye Lang, 2009, p.16).

In the book "Principles of Aesthetics", Ye Lang believes that the thread of Chinese traditional culture has not been broken, and Chinese traditional aesthetics has not stopped influencing the present because of the changes of the times. On the contrary, it has changed with the development of the times and has shown vigorous vitality in the expression of new artistic forms. The researcher Ye Lang also analyzed the hierarchical structure of artworks, and he divided artworks into three levels: technical materials, aesthetic form and content (Ye Lang, 2009, p.368-369).

In the book "Philosophical Dictionary·Aesthetics", Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House (1991), the researcher Jiang Kongyang analyzed the aesthetic concept in the book. The aesthetic concept is the relatively stable overall concept and guiding ideology of the subject in aesthetic practice on beauty, aesthetics, and creation of beauty. It is a component of the world view and aesthetic consciousness. It includes the aesthetic practice view, historical view, value view, political ethics view, artistic view, enjoyment view, etc. The formation and development of aesthetic concepts are

influenced by traditional Chinese aesthetics. It is established after critical inheritance of the aesthetic concepts of predecessors and reference and absorption of the aesthetic concepts of contemporaries, through concept assimilation, concept adaptation, analysis, synthesis, and transformation. More importantly, it is formed and developed by constantly summarizing and summarizing one's own practical experience and aesthetic experience in life practice and aesthetic practice, and rising to theory (Jiang Kongyang, 1991, p.237).

Zong Baihua pointed out. We should not only study landscape painting and figure painting, but also pattern art, especially art forms with profound cultural significance such as dragon and phoenix. Although the dragon and phoenix patterns are not imitations of reality, they have an important influence in Chinese reality. These elements were widely used in ancient decorations and studying them helps to understand the aesthetic form of the Chinese. Some painters of modern Western painting schools, such as Picasso, drew inspiration from ancient patterns and primitive patterns, and innovated through techniques such as geometrization, forming new schools such as expressionism, cubism and geometrism. They drew nourishment from ancient art, created new schools of painting, and became great artists.

Although we do not have to imitate them completely, we should seriously study the ancient Chinese art and cultural heritage, explore the characteristics and development laws of Chinese aesthetics from these materials, and reveal the uniqueness and development laws of Chinese aesthetics (Zong Baihua, 1982, pp. 63-65).

The views of the above foreign and Chinese scholars have given me a deeper understanding of beauty. Mr. Zong Baihua's research on patterns has inspired me and made me clearer about my research direction. Mr. Ye Lang's view: the thread of Chinese traditional culture has not been broken, and Chinese traditional aesthetics has not stopped influencing the present because of the changes of the times. On the contrary, it has changed because of the development of the times and has shown vigorous vitality in the expression of new art forms. This has made my research objectives clearer. My

research adopts Mr. Ye Lang's analysis theory of the hierarchical structure of artworks: dividing artworks into three levels: technical materials, aesthetic forms and content for separate research.

Zhao Kuiying pointed out in Life World and Ecological Aesthetics: The Foundation and Direction of the Reconstruction of Contemporary Chinese Aesthetics (Zhao Kuiying, 2021, 157-157): Contemporary aesthetics returns to the concept of "life world" in the process of reconstruction, emphasizing the connection between aesthetics and life. However, this return is not a simple acceptance of aesthetic phenomena in daily life, but through philosophical reflection, "life world" is defined as the life existence of all beings, based on which the explanatory power of aesthetics for contemporary aesthetic practice activities is enhanced. These views provide a basis for understanding how contemporary Chinese aesthetics draws on traditional aesthetics and Western aesthetic theories to reconstruct an aesthetic system that meets the needs of contemporary society.

Li Shitao proposed in "The Turn of Zhu Guangqian's Contemporary Aesthetics Research": Guangqian's aesthetic research has undergone four turns after the founding of New China. These major and obvious changes reflect the trajectory and characteristics of Zhu Guangqian's later aesthetic research, and thus reflect the development process of contemporary Chinese aesthetics. This article comprehensively sorts out, objectively restores, describes in detail, and reasonably evaluates these four shifts and their effects, deeply studies and specifically analyzes the interaction and complexity of the times and individuals, society and academia, objectivity and subjectivity, history and reality, so as to comprehensively, objectively and scientifically evaluate his academic transformation, academic contributions, and his status, value and significance in the academic history of Chinese aesthetics research (Li Shitao, 2023, pp. 199-200).

Xiao Jianhua. (2024). Towards "super-practical aesthetics" - the third way to construct contemporary Chinese aesthetics in the post-theoretical era. Journal of

Guangzhou University (Social Sciences Edition) (01), 41-56. The difference between practical aesthetics and post-practical aesthetics:

In the article "Towards "super-practical aesthetics" - contemporary Chinese aesthetics in the post-theoretical era", Xiao Jianhua pointed out that practical aesthetics mainly focuses on practical activities centered on material production, and this concept of practice has the characteristics of sociologicalization and historical scientificization. Post-practical aesthetics adopts a "de-practical" stance, denies the essential role of practice in aesthetics, and puts forward a stance against traditional practical aesthetics. The article believes that "super-practical aesthetics" represents a new way of aesthetic thinking in the current theoretical era, which helps to promote the innovation and development of contemporary Chinese aesthetics. (Xiao Jianhua, 2024, p-41-56)

Zhao Xujie proposed in the article "Chinese Contemporary Aesthetics Towards Life": Chinese contemporary aesthetics has experienced two climaxes, namely the "aesthetics discussion" in the 1950s and 1960s and the "aesthetics fever" in the 1980s. These two crazes not only profoundly affected the development direction of Chinese aesthetics, but also established the mainstream position of Marxist aesthetics. In order to make up for the shortcomings of traditional aesthetic theory, scholars proposed the concept of "life aesthetics", emphasizing that aesthetics should move from theory to life, pay attention to aesthetic phenomena in reality, and take benefiting the real life of the masses as the ultimate goal. The traditional roots of life aesthetics are also proposed: the ideological roots of life aesthetics can be traced back to the Chinese classical aesthetic tradition, such as the life aesthetics of Confucianism and Taoism, the life aesthetics of the Wei and Jin Dynasties, and Li Yu's aesthetic interpretation of daily life in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The article also points out that in the process of contemporary aesthetics moving towards social life, we should pay attention to avoiding the problem of aesthetic generalization and realize free transcendence on the basis of real life. The research directions of life aesthetics in the contemporary era include returning to experience, returning to life and returning to nature, emphasizing

the excavation of aesthetic value from real life and improving the aesthetic character and happiness of life.

In general, this article explores the development of contemporary Chinese aesthetics in the context of globalization and the background of the proposal of life aesthetics and analyzes the presentation of life aesthetics in contemporary China and its future development direction. (Zhao Xujie, 2022, p.175-178)

1.7.2.3 Literature review on artistic influence

Heinrich Wölfflin: In his book Fundamental Concepts of the History of Art, he proposed a comparative analysis of different styles in art history and explored the mutual influence between different artistic styles.

Harold Bloom: In The Anxiety of Influence, Bloom explores the relationship of influence between literary works. Although he focuses primarily on the field of literature, his theoretical framework can also be applied to the field of art.

Saleh, B., Abe, K., Arora, RS, & Elgammal, A. (2016). Toward automated discovery of artistic influence. Multimedia Tools The problem of automated discovery of artists' influence is explored by studying the similarity between paintings and artists. The researchers pose the interesting problem of finding influence between painters as a knowledge discovery problem and show interesting results for both qualitative and quantitative measures. For the influence discovery task, the article compares several distance measures between paintings, including Euclidean distance and manifold-based distance. Comparative experiments show that manifold-based distance gives slightly better results. The researchers also provide a tool to visualize artist similarities through so-called artist maps (Saleh, B., Abe, K., Arora, RS, & Elgammal, p. 2016).

In the paper, the researchers also present a new annotated dataset of paintings by a variety of artists, which will be made publicly available and can be used for interdisciplinary tasks in art and computer science.

The article also mentions shortcomings, such as the fact that more colors and lines could be included, especially in the elements and principles of art. Obviously, there are

many ways that artists influence each other. This is why drawing an influence map is such a difficult task.

Pointed out in his article "Free Light and Shadow - On the Formation of Impressionist Painting and Its Artistic Influence" that the definition and research of artistic influence involves the profound influence of artworks and art schools on later creations, concepts and social culture. This influence is not only reflected in the inheritance and innovation of artistic techniques, but also in the evolution of aesthetic concepts, the redefinition of cultural values, and the penetration and transformation of social ideology.

The study of "artistic influence" is often explored by analyzing the influence of a specific art movement or genre on later artists, cultural trends, and social values. For example, the artistic influence of Impressionist painting not only liberated the early painting world and promoted the liberalization and diversification of painting forms, but also adapted to the development trend of the Industrial Revolution, combining scientific light and color theory with artistic creation, and expanding the scope of artistic expression (Xu Erjie, 2023, p.39-41).

Wenfeng Chen pointed out in his article " The Application of Landscape Elements in Five Dynasties Flower and Bird Painting and Its Artistic Influence " that artistic influence can be reflected in many aspects, including technical methods, theme selection, style characteristics, expression forms and ideological connotations. Artistic influence can transcend time and space, such as the inspiration of ancient art on modern art, or the mutual influence between different cultures. It can be direct and obvious, such as imitating or borrowing from others' artistic style, or it can be indirect and subtle, by influencing artists' creative thinking or perception. (Wenfeng Chen, 2024, pp. 5-6)

Cui Wenjun pointed out in his article " A Study on the Influence of Digital Technology on New Media Art " that artistic influence is an important driving force for the evolution and development of art, reflecting the important role of artistic influence. (Cui Wenjun, 2013, p67).

Li Hanfei and Yang Jing's article, "On the Inevitability of the Influence of Russian Oil Painting Art on Oil Painting Creation in Heilongjiang Province from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication" points out that one kind of cultural art can have a profound and far-reaching artistic influence on another kind of cultural art , especially in terms of artistic concepts . (Li Hanfei & Yang Jing, 2023, pp. 28-30).

In the book "Principles of Aesthetics", Ye Lang believes that the thread of Chinese traditional culture has not been broken, and Chinese traditional aesthetics has not stopped influencing current art due to the changes of the times. On the contrary, it has changed with the development of the times and is showing vitality in new artistic forms.

The views of the above-mentioned foreign and Chinese scholars have given me a more comprehensive understanding of the depth and breadth of the concept of artistic influence, allowing me to better utilize the concept of artistic influence to influence the Han Dynasty stone relief art on Chinese contemporary art creation.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

1.8.1 Main concepts

1.8.1.1 Artistic Influence

This study uses the concept of artistic influence, which is used to describe the influence of one art form, work, artist or genre on other art forms, works, artists or genres. This concept involves many aspects such as artistic creation, art dissemination and art reception. However, there is no clear single source or specific scholar who proposed and theoretically supported the specific concept of "artistic influence". This concept was gradually formed and widely accepted in the development of art history and aesthetic research. Heinrich Wölfflin: In "Basic Concepts of Art History", he proposed a comparative analysis of different styles in art history and explored the mutual influence between different artistic styles. Harold Bloom: In "The Anxiety of Influence", Bloom explored the influence relationship between literary works. Although it mainly focuses on the field of literature, its theoretical framework can also

be applied to the field of art.

This influence can be reflected in many aspects, including technical methods, subject selection, style characteristics, forms of expression, and ideological connotations. Artistic influence can transcend time and space, such as the inspiration of ancient art on modern art, or the mutual influence between different cultures. It can be direct and obvious, such as imitating or borrowing the artistic style of others, or it can be indirect and subtle, by influencing the creative thinking or perception of artists. Artistic influence is an important driving force for the evolution and development of art, reflecting the role of art in society, history, and culture as a medium for cultural exchange and dissemination.

1.8.1.2 Aesthetics

Aesthetics originated from Greek and German and was proposed by Baumgarten in 1750. It mainly studies aesthetic activities, that is, the aesthetic relationship between people and the world. It is a spiritual and cultural activity. Aesthetics not only studies art, but also involves categories such as beauty, ugliness, and sublimity, focusing on the relationship between people and beauty. Scholars believe that aesthetics is not only a doctrine about "beauty", but should be understood as "philosophy of art", focusing on the imagination and creativity of works of art.

The history of aesthetics in the West can be traced back to the time of Plato, while China's aesthetic tradition began to develop in the pre-Qin period. Lao Tzu, Confucius and others laid the foundation for Taoist and Confucian aesthetics, which influenced later generations.

Contemporary Chinese aesthetics is a discipline that has gradually developed since the reform and opening up, along with the changes in social economy, culture and thought. It not only inherits the aesthetic tradition of the Chinese nation, but also engages in dialogue and integration with the world's aesthetic thoughts, forming an aesthetic system with Chinese characteristics.

Different from traditional aesthetics, contemporary Chinese aesthetics pays more

attention to the reflection of social reality and the exploration of cultural identity. At the same time, it also emphasizes how to maintain its own cultural independence and originality in the dialogue with Western aesthetic thoughts in the context of globalization.

Contemporary Chinese aesthetics is largely influenced by traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. These ideas are reinterpreted in contemporary aesthetics to explore aesthetic issues in modern life. While absorbing and learning from Western aesthetic thoughts, contemporary Chinese aesthetics always maintains reflection and innovation on its own culture, striving to make a "Chinese voice" in the context of globalization and form an aesthetic theory system with global influence.

When analyzing works of art, a hierarchical structure is usually used, such as material, form, and content. Chinese scholar Ye Lang proposed a more suitable method for analyzing the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, which is divided into carving technology, artistic form, and work content. Therefore, combining traditional Chinese aesthetics can better understand these works of art.

1.8.1.3 Cultural Value

The traditional human understanding is that culture is a social phenomenon, a product created by humans in the long historical process, and also a historical phenomenon, the accumulation of human social history. Specifically, culture is both embodied in material form and transcends material. It is the way of thinking, values, lifestyle, behavioral norms, scientific and technological achievements, etc. of a nation or a people, and has inheritance.

The definition of the concept of cultural value covers many aspects. Broad culture includes all spiritual and material wealth created by human beings in social practice, representing "great culture". Narrow culture only covers spiritual wealth, usually referring to the spiritual civilization part. This paper adopts the concept of broad culture because material and spiritual culture are closely related. Especially when studying the

stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, this broad perspective helps to fully explore and utilize cultural resources.

Value is the standard for evaluating whether something is meaningful, and it is subjective, diverse and dynamic. When studying the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art, we should adopt the broad cultural concept and examine and sort out the Han Dynasty stone relief art, a precious cultural heritage of our nation, with the broadest vision, so as to fully explore and fully utilize the resources. On the contrary, if we adopt the narrow cultural concept and only focus on the spiritual level of culture, then many contents of China's excellent traditional culture, such as traditional food, clothing, architecture and other cultural forms, will inevitably be excluded.

The classification of cultural values includes four levels: material culture (tangible objects and technology), behavioral culture (daily behavior patterns), institutional culture (laws and social structures), and spiritual culture (values and beliefs). These levels together constitute the overall framework of culture, interact with each other, and affect all aspects of society.

1.8.2 Conceptual Framework

This study takes the Han Dynasty stone relief art as the core and Chinese contemporary art as the background. First, it uses the cultural value theory to analyze the cultural significance of the Han Dynasty stone relief art, and explains its material value, institutional value, behavioral value and spiritual value; secondly, it uses the concept of aesthetics to examine the formation and manifestation of the aesthetic concept of Han Dynasty stone relief art, and combines it with the context of Chinese contemporary art to evaluate the aesthetic value of Han Dynasty stone relief art; thirdly , it uses the concept of artistic influence to examine the impact of Han Dynasty stone relief art on Chinese contemporary art creation; finally, based on the above analysis, conclusions and discussions are drawn.

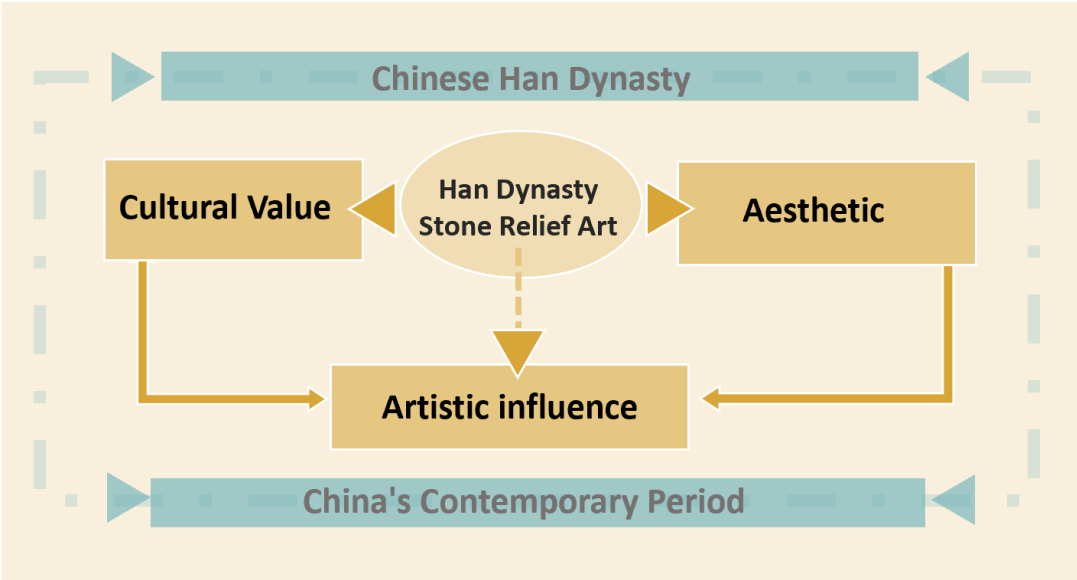

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Source: Drawn by researcher (2023.5)

1.9 Research Plan

The research plan is divided into three levels: General objective and plan, staged, research plans, and timetable (Figure 2).

The general objective defines the overall task for study and research in each semester, and the staged learning objectives and timetable define the monthly objectives and point out the specific implementation. strategies. Moreover, control strategies and methods will be formulated to ensure those plans and objectives.

Table 1 Time schedule form

Doctoral Research Program 2023-2024																									
No.	Learning content	Start	End	Period (2023-2024)																					
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Ts2 Draft	11/01 2023	20/3 2023																								
2	Ts2 Completed Draft	20/02 2023	31/04 2023																								
3	**Han Dynasty stone relief art** Museum research	1/01 2023	31/05 2023																								
5	Interview population sample review sample (online and offline)	20/04 2023	11802 2024																								
6	Ts3 Draft	23/04 2024	31/06 2024																								
7	Ts3 Completed Draft	18/6 2024	19/8 2024																								

Source: Produced by researcher, (2024.03)

1. 10 Benefits of Research

(1) In the field of inheriting and protecting local cultural heritage, government agencies can use these research results as an important reference to guide the inheritance and promotion of relevant local cultural heritage. This study proposes an analysis of the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art, which can provide theoretical support for the effective inheritance and promotion of local cultural heritage.

(2) The application of these research results in the academic field is also significant. This study uses the concept of artistic influence to explore how contemporary Chinese artists reinterpret and integrate the elements of Han Dynasty stone relief art in contemporary creation, revealing the innovative combination of traditional and contemporary art. This approach can inspire more contemporary Chinese artists to better inherit Chinese local culture and create new artistic styles through learning and drawing on traditional culture.

(3) The research results on the artistic and cultural value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs can be applied to the cultural and creative industries, promoting the innovation and development of the cultural industries and creating more economic and social benefits.

(4) Through the promotion and publicity of the research results on the aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone relief art, the general public can improve their own artistic aesthetic ability and enhance their appreciation of works of art, which has a positive significance for enriching personal spiritual life. Promoting the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art can help the public better understand and recognize ancient Chinese culture. By displaying and publicizing these research results, the public's interest in traditional Chinese culture can be stimulated and cultural literacy can be improved.

CHAPTER II

The geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art

Introduction

This chapter mainly introduces the basic overview and development process of Han Dynasty stone relief art. First, the historical background of the Han Dynasty is outlined, and the prosperity and development of Han Dynasty stone relief in the Han Dynasty are shown. Han Dynasty stone relief is an important decorative art for tombs and ancestral halls in China during the Han Dynasty, mainly used to express the living's mourning for the dead and religious beliefs. Secondly, the content expressed by Han Dynasty stone relief is analyzed in detail, mainly including real life, myths and legends, historical stories, and astronomical themes, which reflect the cultural, philosophical and religious concepts of Han Dynasty society. Through vivid carvings, Han Dynasty stone relief art combines realism and romanticism, showing optimism about life and desire for the future. The geographical distribution and tomb structure of Han Dynasty stone relief are introduced, and the differences in the themes and expression methods of Han Dynasty stone relief in different regions are discussed, and the reasons behind these differences are found. Then the social environment of the rise and fall of Han Dynasty stone relief art is studied, and the factors of its rise and fall are analyzed. Finally, the discovery process and current situation of Han Dynasty stone relief art are analyzed, and it is found that Han Dynasty stone relief art is not well known by the public in contemporary Chinese society and has little cultural influence.

2.1 Overview of Han Dynasty Stone Picture Art

2.1.1 Introduction to the Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty, from 202 BC to 220 AD, was a unified dynasty following the Qin Dynasty. It was divided into two periods, the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty. The Western Han Dynasty had 13 emperors and lasted for 210 years, while the Eastern Han Dynasty had 14 emperors and lasted for 195 years. During the peasant uprising at the end of the Qin Dynasty, Liu Bang participated in overthrowing the Qin Dynasty. He then defeated Xiang Yu in the Chu-Han Contention and became emperor in 202 BC, establishing the Han Dynasty with its capital in Chang'an, which is known as the Western Han Dynasty.

Gaozu of Han, Liu Bang, established the Western Han Dynasty with its capital in Chang'an, also known as the Former Han Dynasty. Emperor Guangwu of Han, Liu Xiu, established the Eastern Han Dynasty with its capital in Luoyang, also known as the Later Han Dynasty; the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty are collectively known as the Two Han Dynasties (Zhang Qingli. 2023, p.58-60).

In the early Han Dynasty, the rulers adopted the Huang-Lao school of thought（ Huang-Lao School, also known as Huang-Lao Doctrine, is the collective name of the Yellow Emperor's School and Laozi 's School, and is the source of Chinese Taoism. The Huang-Lao School of Thought values masculinity and strength. From the middle of the Warring States Period to the Qin and Han Dynasties, Huang- Lao Taoist thought was extremely popular. It has both rich theoretical content and a strong sense of reality）. to recuperate and bring about the prosperity of the reign of Emperor Wen and Emperor Jing. After Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty ascended the throne, he strengthened centralization, implemented the Enfeoffment Order, and implemented the policy of " rejecting all schools of thought and respecting Confucianism alone "; he attacked the Xiongnu, opened up the Silk Road, and established the Western Regions Protectorate to incorporate the Western Regions into the territory. In the late Western Han Dynasty, foreign relatives interfered in politics and social contradictions intensified. In 8 AD,

Wang Mang abolished the Han Dynasty and established the Xinmang regime, and the Western Han Dynasty perished. At the end of the Xinmang period, the Green Forest and Red Eyebrows Uprising broke out, and Liu Xiu rebuilt the Han Dynasty and established Luoyang as the capital, which was known as the Eastern Han Dynasty. After Liu Xiu unified the world, he brought about the Guangwu Restoration; Emperor Ming and Emperor Zhang reduced taxes and created the Mingzhang Reign; Emperor He of the Han Dynasty attacked the Xiongnu and expanded the Silk Road, bringing the national strength of the Eastern Han Dynasty to its peak. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, disputes between relatives and eunuchs occurred frequently, and two Party Prison Disasters broke out. After the Yellow Turban Rebellion, local tyrants split and the Han Dynasty gradually declined. In 220 AD, Cao Pi replaced the Han emperor and the Han Dynasty fell.

The Han Dynasty was the most advanced civilization and powerful empire in the world at that time. At its peak, its territory extended to Korea in the east, Vietnam in the south, the Pamir Mountains in the west, and Mongolia in the north (Figure 2). There was almost no difference between the spheres of influence of the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty.

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Figure 2 Map of the Western Han Dynasty

Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&ipn(April 2024)

Reign of Emperor He of the Han Dynasty， the territory of the Eastern Han Dynasty reached its peak . At that time, the Han army completely defeated the Northern Xiongnu, the hostile forces in the north were eliminated, and the Xianbei and Southern Xiongnu both surrendered to the Han Dynasty. In the sixth year of Yongyuan (94 AD), the Western Regions were pacified, and the western territory extended all the way to the coast. Its territory extended to Xianglin County, Rinan, Jiaozhou (now central Vietnam), in the south, to the Hu Wuhuan Schoolmaster's Office in the north, to Wusun and Dayuan west of the Pamir Mountains in the west, and to the vast area of Lelang County in the east. Some scholars have calculated based on the "Atlas of Chinese History" edited by Tan Qixiang that the territory of the Han Dynasty during the Eastern Han Dynasty was about 4.92 million square kilometers (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Map of the Eastern Han territory

Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&i(April 2024)

In the early Han Dynasty, the system of counties and kingdoms was implemented. Liu Bang initially appointed seven kings of different surnames, and later gradually eliminated most of them, leaving only Wu Rui, the King of Changsha. At the same time, he granted many rewards to princes of the same surname, making the local kingdoms powerful and threatening the control of the central government. During the reign of Empress Lü, the number of princes of foreign relatives increased. During the reign of Emperor Wen, the number of princes of the Liu clan was eliminated, but the local forces still posed a threat to the central government. Emperor Wen [2]adopted the policy of dividing the land to weaken the power of the princes. After Emperor [3]Jing ascended the throne, he further reduced the fiefdoms of the kingdoms, which triggered the

[2] Emperor Wen of Han, Liu Heng (203 BC - 157 BC), was the fourth son of Liu Bang , the founding emperor of the Western Han Dynasty , and the fifth emperor of the Han Dynasty. Liu Heng was known throughout the world for his benevolence and filial piety. During his 24-year reign, he emphasized moral governance, promoted etiquette, worked hard to govern, was lenient and frugal, loved the people and valued agriculture, which made the Western Han society stable, the population prosperous, and the economy recovered and developed. Together with the period of Emperor Jing of Han, it is known as the " Reign of Wen and Jing ".

Rebellion of the Seven Kingdoms, and eventually quelled and reduced the jurisdiction of each kingdom. During the reign of Emperor Wu, the Enfeoffment Order was implemented to gradually weaken the power of the princes and expand the central government's control over the local areas. By 2 ADS, there were 103 counties, 1,314 counties, 32 prefectures, and 241 marquisates in the country.

During the Han Dynasty, the Huaxia people gradually became known as the Han people. The Han Dynasty had outstanding achievements in thought, history, literature, art, science and technology. Confucianism was dominant, Buddhism and Taoism developed side by side, and Hanfu and Yuefu poetry flourished. "Records of the Grand Historian" and "Book of Han" set a precedent for historical records, and the invention and improvement of papermaking promoted the development of human civilization (Lei Hongji, 2009.p11-17).

2.1.2 Definition of Han Dynasty Stone Relief

Architectural stones with carved images on underground tombs, cemetery ancestral halls, tomb towers, and temple towers during the Han and Wei dynasties. They are a kind of exquisite stone carving art. Most of the buildings to which the Han Dynasty stone reliefs belong are funeral ritual buildings. Therefore, in essence, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are a kind of sacrificial funeral art. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only the pinnacle of the development of Chinese classical art before the Han Dynasty, but also have a profound impact on the art after the Han Dynasty. They occupy an important position in the history of Chinese art (Wang Lina, 2020, p.40-43).

During the Han Dynasty, on the broad historical stage of the powerful and unified centralized system, various heroic figures full of vitality emerged and staged a series of generous and magnificent historical dramas that were enough to make future generations sigh. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are an artistic wonder that grew from the fertile soil of this heroic era. As a typical funeral art, the theme it expresses is the eternal tragic theme of the living offering sacrifices and mourning the dead. However, in terms of artistic expression, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty did not

depict death as miserable and sad but were full of optimism and desire for the future and life. In this regard, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty can be regarded as a model of the combination of classical realism and romanticism. On the one hand, as a funeral art, it must face up to and respect the social etiquette and customs, refine and process the scenes of ancestor worship at that time, and depict them as accurately, realistically and meticulously as possible; on the other hand, it strives to express people's desire for life to overcome death. Putting personal life and death into the eternal changes of the universe to express it is itself a great artistic proposition. Using ancient mythology to depict the universe makes the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only have a mysterious charm, but also are filled with a simple and ancient power.

Most of the craftsmen who made the stone reliefs came from the folks. They usually started learning carving, painting and other skills from a young age, and the skills were mainly passed down through the family or apprenticeship system. The craftsmen accumulated experience by participating in large-scale projects such as folk architecture and tombs, and gradually formed their own style and skills. Most of these craftsmen came from civilian families and made a living by their skills. Their works mostly reflect the life scenes and beliefs of the people and have strong local characteristics. The craftsmen engaged in the art of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty were like the artists who carved and painted in ancient Greece. They were all slaves and civilians, and the feudal nobles disdained to do such things. It can be seen from this that "artists" are "craftsmen" or "craftsmen" and have a humble status.

Some craftsmen come from families or workshops that specialize in carving or painting. These families or workshops may have been engaged in artistic creation for several generations. Such craftsmen are often highly skilled and can produce works of great artistic value. The inheritance of craftsmen's families or workshops ensures the stable continuation of skills and makes the style of stone reliefs consistent within a certain area. Like artists such as sculptors and painters in ancient Greece, it is these "craftsmen" composed of ordinary people who created a peak in the development of

Chinese art.

2.1.3 Contents expressed by Han Dynasty stone relief art.

The Han Dynasty stone relief art is rich in content and wide range of subjects. In general, there are three main types: first, real life, mainly reproducing the luxurious scenes of the tomb owner's life; second, myths and legends, which are the tomb owner's spiritual support; third historical stories, reflecting the tomb owner's moral creed; the combination of coherent action and graphic representation of the content of Han Dynasty stone relief art makes it shine in the long history of Chinese culture and art. This is the cultural root of contemporary art, which provides a wealth of artistic expression methods and techniques for the development and maturity of contemporary art. If subdivided, it can be divided into more categories. (Song Yanping, 2024, pp. 23-28). Let’s introduce it in detail below.

(1) Celestial themes in Han Dynasty stone relief art

The astronomical themes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are an important part of Han Dynasty art, showing the Han people's understanding of the universe, observation of natural phenomena, as well as their religious beliefs, philosophical thinking and social concepts (Liu Lili, 2021, p.78). Astronomy was relatively developed in the Han Dynasty, and the astronomical images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang are the most abundant, which may be related to the influence of the famous scientist Zhang Heng.

The people of the Han Dynasty had a beautiful yearning and mysterious imagination for celestial phenomena. Artists used exaggeration and variation to incorporate images such as the three-legged bird in the sun, the toad, the jade rabbit and Chang'e in the moon, and the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl in the sky into the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The frequent appearance of feathered figures reflects the Han people's pursuit of the idea of " harmony between man and nature " [4]. As shown in

[4] "Harmony between man and nature" is a Chinese philosophical thought, and Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and other schools have their own interpretations. Heaven refers to the sky , the way of heaven, and the natural way. The heaven mentioned by Taoism and Taoism mostly refers to nature and the way of heaven. Harmony

Figure 4, "The Queen Mother of the West", the Queen Mother of the West is surrounded by many feathered figures and mythical beasts, which is rough, confused, and grand, reflecting the Han people's cosmology from an artistic perspective (Cai Huan, 2024, p83-85)

Figure 4 Image of the Winged Man Paying Homage to the Queen Mother of the West (rubbing)5

Source: https://www.google.com/search?(2023.05)

The images of the sun and the moon are often carved in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. The sun is usually depicted as a circle with radiant light, symbolizing brightness and vitality. The moon is often depicted as a crescent, symbolizing femininity and tranquility. This image of the sun and the moon shining together reflects the observation and worship of the movement of the sun and the moon by the people of the Han Dynasty. Some stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are engraved with patterns of stars and constellations, showing the observation of the night sky and the interest of astrology by the people of the Han Dynasty. In particular, the Big Dipper often appears

between man and nature mostly refers to the state of "heaven and earth are born with me, and all things are one with me" when man and Tao are united, and it also refers to the harmony and correspondence between man and nature.

[5] The finished product is the result of using ink to transfer the text and patterns on stone carvings and ancient artifacts onto paper. This kind of rubbing behavior is also called rubbing. A rubbing is a copy made directly from the original object. Its size and shape are the same as the original. It is a scientific recording method. Oracle bone inscriptions, steles, Han Dynasty stone reliefs, etc. all use this method to record.

in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. As an important astronomical symbol, the Big Dipper is regarded as a symbol of guidance.

Although many celestial themes are realistic, there are also many abstract and symbolic expressions. For example, cloud patterns often use abstract patterns, which are both decorative and symbolic. The composition of celestial themes often emphasizes symmetry and balance, showing the harmonious aesthetics of Han Dynasty art. The image of the sun and the moon shining together is usually symmetrical (Figure 5), showing the concept of yin and yang harmony. Through the depth of the carving and the density of the lines, the celestial images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs show a rich sense of spatial hierarchy, making the images more three-dimensional and vivid.

Figure 5 Images of the Sun God and the Moon God (rubbing)
Source: https://www.google.com/search ? (2023.05)

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs sometimes depict natural phenomena such as wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. These images not only show the Han people's observation of natural phenomena, but also reflect their mysterious awe and mythological explanations of these phenomena.

Cloud pattern is a common decorative pattern in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, symbolizing the changes of clouds in the sky. The use of cloud pattern not only increases the dynamic sense of the image, but also reflects the aesthetic pursuit of natural beauty by the Han people.

Figure 6 The Moon, the Blue Dragon, and the Constellations
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

As shown in Figure 6, "The Moon, Azure Dragon and Constellations", it was found in Ruantang, Pushan, Nanyang City. It is a collection of scattered Han Dynasty stone

reliefs collected from the public. A full moon is carved on the upper part of the picture, with a jade rabbit and a toad inside; a lively dragon is carved on the lower part of the picture, and many stars are carved from the dragon's head to the dragon's tail. In the Han Dynasty, the twenty-eight constellations were divided into four areas according to the direction, called "four palaces" or "four officials", each palace (official) has seven constellations, named after four gods. This picture should be a star map of the Azure Dragon constellation in the East Palace, indicating the celestial phenomenon of the moon moving in the east.

The celestial phenomena in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the idea of "the interaction between heaven and man", that is, the idea that natural celestial phenomena are closely related to human destiny. Changes in celestial phenomena are seen as hints from heaven to the human world, and people predict good and bad fortune by observing celestial phenomena. Celestial images are related to sacrificial activities, reflecting the religious beliefs and the desire for blessings in Han Dynasty society. The Han people expressed their understanding of the structure of the universe through celestial images and regarded changes in celestial phenomena as symbols of the country's political situation. Good celestial phenomena indicate the prosperity of the country, while abnormal celestial phenomena indicate political problems or disasters. This concept reflects the close connection between celestial phenomena and the concept of governing the country (Hao Ming, 2017, P.73-74).

In short, the celestial phenomena in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only show the Han people's observation and thinking of natural phenomena and the universe, but also reflect their religious beliefs, philosophical concepts and social values. These images vividly reproduce the celestial worship and natural concepts of Han Dynasty society through exquisite carving skills and unique artistic style. Through these Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

(2) Themes of gods and ghosts in Han Dynasty stone reliefs

During the Eastern Han Dynasty, due to the limited level of cognition, people

believed that all things have spirits, which naturally gave rise to a large number of beliefs in worshiping natural gods, earth gods, and ancestral gods. All incomprehensible things were explained and expressed in terms of ghosts and gods.

Regarding themes of gods and immortals, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty mainly depict the content and images of ancient ancestors, among which Nuwa, Fuxi, and Queen Mother of the West appear most frequently. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, due to limited cognitive level, people believed that all things have spirits, worshipped natural gods, earth gods, and ancestral gods, and used ghosts and gods to explain things that were difficult to understand. The theme of gods and immortals is common in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, mainly depicting ancient ancestors, such as Nuwa, Fuxi [6], and Queen Mother of the West [7], especially Fuxi and Nuwa. As shown in Figure 7 "Fuxi, Nuwa, and Divine Objects", these two ancestral gods are regarded as guardians of the interests of their own tribe. Fuxi created the Eight Diagrams and characters, and Nuwa had the merits of repairing the sky and creating humans.

[6] Fuxi , the founder of Chinese humanities and one of the Three Sovereigns , is also the god of blessing the country and the earliest creator god recorded in Chinese literature . Nuwa , the goddess of creation in ancient Chinese mythology , is the founder of Chinese humanities and the god of blessing the country .

[7] After the founding of Taoism, the Queen Mother of the West was included in the pantheon and became the supreme goddess of Taoism. She was commonly known as the "Queen Mother of the West" among the people. The title of "Queen Mother of the West" first appeared in the Classic of Mountains and Seas. Because the Kunlun Hill where she lived was originally in the west of Hanzhong, she was called the Queen Mother of the West.

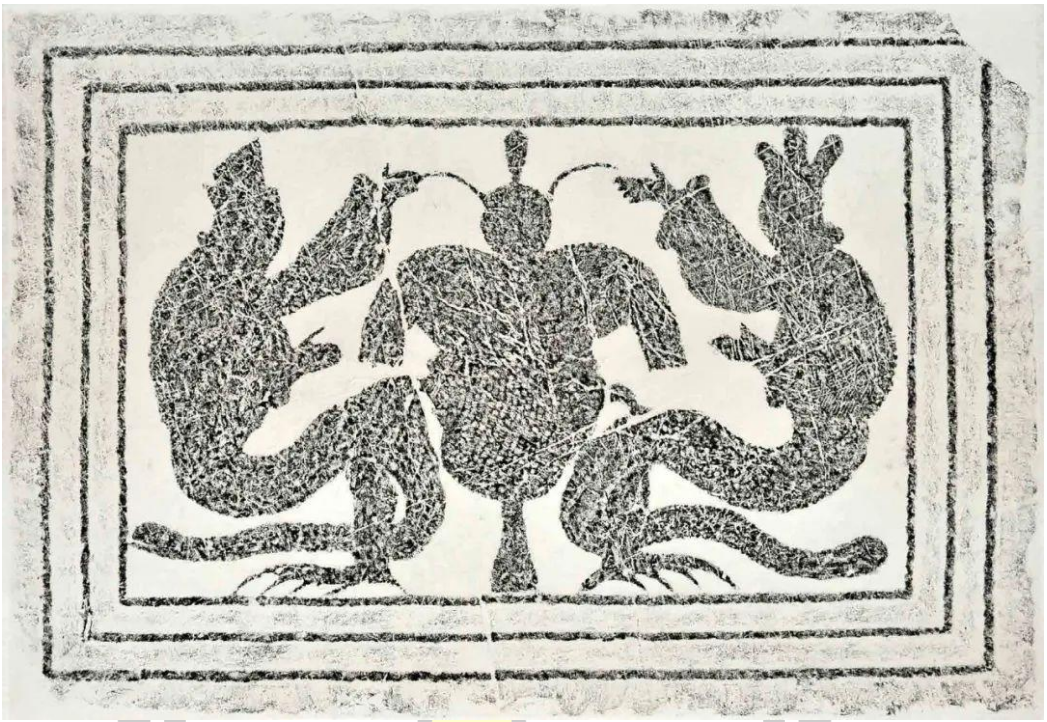

Figure 7 Fuxi, Nuwa, and Divine Objects (rubbing)
Source: https://www.google.com/search?（2023.05）

In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, Fuxi and Nuwa are usually portrayed as human-headed snake bodies or human-headed dragon bodies, symbolizing the order of heaven and earth. Queen Mother of the West (Figure 8) first appeared in a strange world of half-human and half-beast, and later became a god who made elixirs (Liu Rong, 2019, p.18-25).

Figure 8 Image of worshipping the Queen Mother of the West (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.1)

The themes of gods and ghosts are an important part of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, reflecting people's beliefs and imaginations about gods, ghosts and supernatural phenomena at that time. The following is a detailed description of the themes of gods and ghosts in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty:

The Han Dynasty society attached great importance to filial piety and family inheritance. The worship of ancestor gods was prominently reflected in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Ancestor gods were usually depicted as solemn and dignified elders, symbolizing the protectors and benefactors of the family. Scenes of ancestor worship were also a common theme, reflecting the respect and commemoration of ancestors.

Some Han Dynasty relief stones also depict family guardian gods, such as kitchen gods, door gods [8], etc. These gods are believed to protect the safety and prosperity of the family, and are usually depicted holding magic tools or weapons, symbolizing the

[8] Local guardian gods, the belief of the people in local guardian gods, is a folk custom formed in the long-term production and life. It expresses people's good wishes for a peaceful life , a happy family, prosperity, health and longevity, and everything goes well. The local guardian gods worshipped by people mainly include: City God , Land God , Door God , Kitchen God , etc.

power to ward off evil and avoid disasters.

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty depict scenes of exorcising ghosts and warding off evil spirits, including Taoists performing rituals and gods exorcising ghosts. These images show the religious rituals and folk beliefs of the time, and reflect people's desire to pray for peace and ward off evil spirits. Taoists are often depicted holding instruments and chanting spells, showing their great magical powers.

Some symbols and patterns used to exorcise evil spirits and avoid evil are also common in Han Dynasty relief stones, such as spells and auspicious animals. These symbols and patterns are believed to have mysterious powers and can protect people from the invasion of ghosts and monsters. The themes of gods and ghosts in Han Dynasty relief stones reflect the belief system of polytheism, covering gods of heaven, earth, ancestors and various natural gods. This belief system shows the awe and worship of supernatural powers in Han Dynasty society. Taoism gradually formed and developed in the Han Dynasty. The images of Taoists and ghost-exorcising rituals in Han Dynasty relief stones reflect the influence of Taoist thought. At the same time, witchcraft and folk beliefs are also reflected in Han Dynasty relief stones, showing a rich and diverse religious culture. Han Dynasty philosophy focuses on the balance of yin and yang, and the themes of gods and ghosts in Han Dynasty relief stones also reflect this concept. Figure 9 "Harmony between Heaven, Earth and Man", the opposition and balance between gods of heaven and earth, and righteous gods and ghosts, reflects the understanding and pursuit of the cosmic order of the Han people. The depiction of the underworld and ghosts reflects the concept of life and death of the Han people. Death is regarded as another form of existence, and the underworld is the destination of the dead. This concept of life and death influenced the funeral customs and sacrificial activities of the Han Dynasty.

Figure 9 “Harmony between Heaven, Earth and Man” shows the opposition and balance between the gods of heaven and earth, and between the righteous gods and ghosts.

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.01)

The themes of gods and ghosts played a role in moral education to a certain extent. By depicting the judgment of the underworld and the punishment of ghosts, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty conveyed the concept of retribution for good and evil, and warned people to abide by social morality and legal norms. The worship of ancestral gods and family guardian gods reflected the concept of family and clan in Han Dynasty society, which played an important role in maintaining social order and stability.

In short, the themes of gods and ghosts in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly demonstrate the religious beliefs, philosophical concepts and social values of Han Dynasty society through rich and diverse images. These images not only reflect people's awe and worship of supernatural powers, but also reflect their profound thinking about life and death, ethics and cosmic order.

(3) Auspicious themes in Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The themes of praying for blessings and auspiciousness in Han Dynasty stone reliefs are an important part of Han Dynasty art. These images not only show people's yearning and pursuit for happiness and a better life at that time, but also reflect their religious beliefs, philosophical concepts and social culture.

In the Han Dynasty, when Confucianism was the only doctrine, Confucianism

gradually became the dominant ideology in people's minds. The Confucian theory of "the correspondence between heaven and man" greatly influenced people's worldview. According to Dong Zhongshu's view, a wise and virtuous ruler will be blessed by heaven, and corresponding auspicious things will naturally appear one after another: on the contrary, those who are accompanied by unrighteous emperors are warned by heaven of rampant disasters. Perhaps because Liu Bang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, was originally a commoner and did not have a prominent family background, the emperors of the Han Dynasty, especially the emperors of the early Han Dynasty, often paid special attention to borrowing auspicious phenomena to show that Liu's rule was a natural arrangement of heaven. Even the emperor was like this, and the pursuit of auspicious things became more and more uncontrollable. As shown in Figure 10, "Phoenix Holding Stars", a phoenix mouth string with six stars represents people's desire for auspiciousness.

Figure 10 he painting “Phoenix Holding Stars” shows a phoenix holding six stars.
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.01)

Perhaps the appearance of things that are praised by people as representing auspiciousness always brings joy and hope to people's hearts. In the same way, decorating tombs with auspicious images is a kind of psychological comfort for both the tomb owner and his descendants. As shown in Figure 11, "Phoenix", a stone carving of a phoenix stands frontally with its wings spread out and its tail feathers like a peacock spreading its tail. The appearance of the phoenix is a good omen for peace in the world. In the history books of the Han Dynasty, we can often see descriptions of the appearance of auspicious signs.

Figure 11 his picture shows the ancient auspicious bird Phoenix.
Source: Photographed by researcherr at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

Figure 12, “Deer Immortal”, has exquisite patterns, fine details, and a peaceful and tranquil posture, which reflects the Han Dynasty’s concept of praying for blessings and

good luck. This concept of praying for blessings and good luck and the display of many auspicious images in the Han Dynasty had a far-reaching influence, so that in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there appeared a special type of painting and pattern that specifically depicts auspicious themes - auspicious patterns.

Figure 12 his picture shows the ancient auspicious animal, the fairy deer.
Source: Photographed by researcherr (April 2024)

(4) Historical Stories in Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs

The historical stories in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs record important events and figures of the Han Dynasty through exquisite carving and vivid expression. These images not only reproduce history, but also play the role of moral education and cultural inheritance, vividly conveying the loyalty, filial piety, chastity, righteousness and governance of the Han Dynasty, and becoming an important part of Chinese culture.

For example, there are stories about Liu Bang in the Han Dynasty relief stones, such as "Hongmen Banquet" and "Chu-Han Contention", which show his bravery and wisdom, and emphasize the establishment of the Han Dynasty and the legitimacy of

imperial power. There are also stories such as "Su Wu Shepherding Sheep" and "Zhang Qian's Mission to the Western Regions", which show loyalty, bravery and patriotism. In addition, some Han Dynasty relief stones also depict stories of wise monarchs and wise ministers, such as " Wenjing's Reign "and " Zhou Gong's Assistance to Government ", which convey the wisdom of governing the country (Yue Minjing, 2018, p17-21).

Among the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in various places, the common historical stories include " Two Peaches Killing Three Gentlemen " [9](Figure 13), which mainly tells how King Jing of Qi cleverly used two peaches to get rid of three brave but arrogant ministers, Gongsun Jie, Tian Kaijiang, and Guyezi. This story not only shows the use of wisdom and strategy, but also reflects the complexity and cruelty of power struggles. " Jing Ke Assassinates Qin " [10], " Fishing the Tripod from Sishui " [11], "Confucius Meets Laozi", "The Orphan of Zhao" and so on (Zhao Yaoshuang, 2003, p.15-17).

[9] “ "Two peaches kill three men " is an idiom story from the Spring and Autumn Period. It mainly tells how Duke Jing of Qi cleverly used two peaches to get rid of three brave but arrogant ministers, Gongsun Jie, Tian Kaijiang, and Guyezi. This story not only shows the use of wisdom and strategy, but also reflects the complexity and cruelty in the struggle for power.

[10] " Jing Ke Assassinated Qin " refers to the fact that in 227 BC, Jing Ke was sent by Yan Prince Dan to Qin State to assassinate Qin King Ying Zheng with the Yan Du Kang map and Fan Yuqi's head . When Jing Ke presented the Yan Du Kang map, the dagger in the map was revealed, and he failed to assassinate Qin King and was killed.

[11]" Sishui Laoding " The story of the Nine Cauldrons originated from the ancient worship of the tripod. In ancient China, the tripod was not only a cooking utensil, but also a symbol of power, representing supreme authority. During the reign of Qin Shihuang, the Nine Cauldrons were considered a symbol of the common master of the world. Qin Shihuang tried to find the Nine Cauldrons in the Si River, but failed. There are also records of the search for the Nine Cauldrons during the reigns of Emperor Wen and Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, but the results are not certain.

Figure 13 The historical theme of "Killing Three People Because of Two Peaches."
Source: Photographed by researcherr (March 2024)

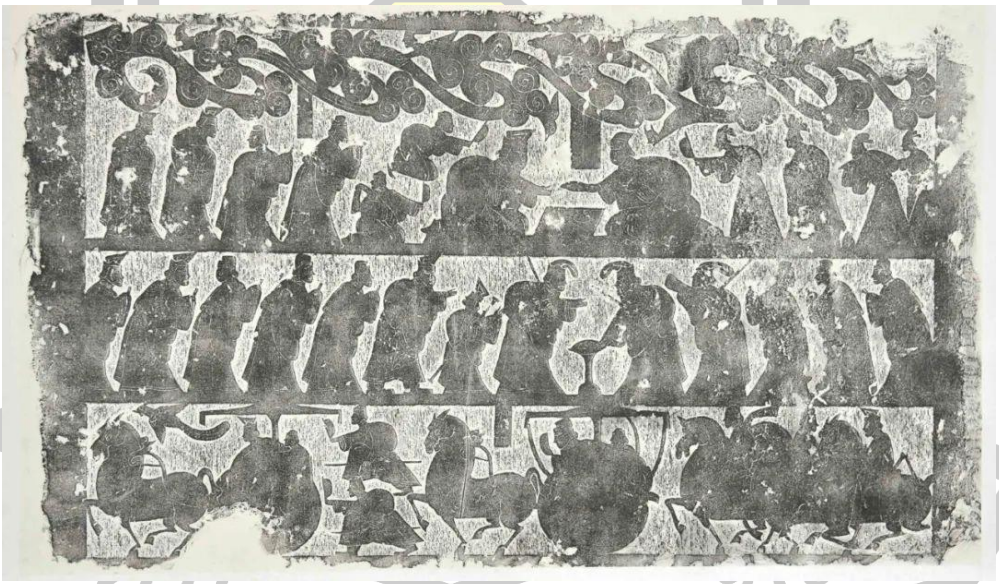

Figure 14 Banquet, signing of an alliance, and a journey by carriage (rubbing)
Source: Provided by a personal collector.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in the Wu Family Temple in Jiaxiang, Shandong, are a classic display of the success and failure of Han Dynasty history. As shown in Figure 14, the painting is divided into three layers: the first layer shows the couple

kneeling and eating; the second layer shows the signing of a covenant; and the third layer shows the carriage and horse.

As for the historical stories in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the Shandong Han Dynasty stone reliefs are the most abundant. In the Suide area of Shaanxi, perhaps because it is located in the frontier, or because the people there are too immersed in the settlements, In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, there are few pictures depicting historical stories, amidst the farming life in the fields.

(5) Themes of carriages and horses in Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The theme of traveling by carriage and horse in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty is an important part of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. These images not only show the travel methods and means of transportation of the society at that time, but also reflect the social structure, etiquette system and cultural life of the Han Dynasty. The following is a detailed description of the theme of traveling by carriage and horse in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty.

The common images of carriages and horses in the Han Dynasty relief stone depict luxurious carriages, including the travel scenes of emperors, officials and nobles. Figure 15: Traveling Pictures These carriages are usually pulled by four, six or even eight horses, and the carriages are gorgeously decorated, showing the noble status and dignity of the owner. The scale of the carriages and horses also reflects the status of the owner. The motorcades of senior officials and nobles are huge, with guards, attendants and honor guards in front and behind, showing a strong etiquette and solemn atmosphere.

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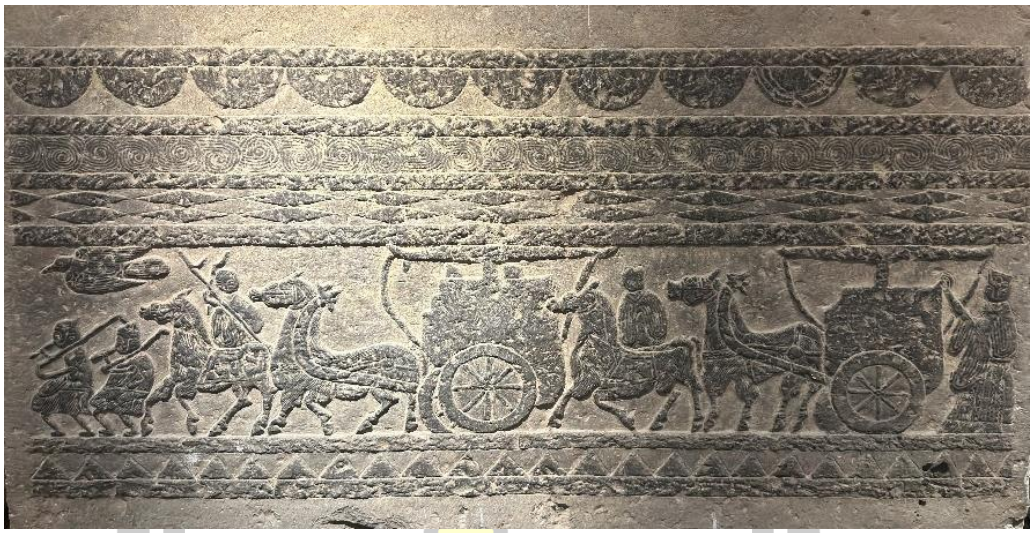

Figure 15 A picture of a carriage and horse traveling

Source: Photographed by researcherr at Shandong Museum (April 2024)

These scenes of carriages and horse travel in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only feature countless huge vehicles, but also horse teams and knights following closely behind. What a grand occasion, what a magnificent scene! Perhaps we can only appreciate them in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, because it is difficult to see these "luxurious" scenes in the art works of later generations.

The themes of carriages and horses in the Han Dynasty relief stones vividly show the travel methods, social structure and cultural life of the Han Dynasty through vivid images and exquisite carvings. These images not only reflect the means of transportation and travel methods at that time, but also show the social hierarchy, etiquette system and lifestyle of the Han Dynasty.

(6) Scenes depicting the life of the tomb owner

The pictures of the tomb owner's life in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly show the daily life, family activities, entertainment methods and religious beliefs of the Han people through vivid images and delicate carvings. These images not only reflect the economic foundation and cultural life of the Han Dynasty society, but also show the tomb owner's love and yearning for a better life. People often say that life is colorful, and the owner of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also wanted to decorate the underground

world to be no less beautiful than the aboveground world.

The colorful life comes from the splendor of all aspects of life - the warehouse is full, the house is beautiful, the banquet is joyful, and the performances are exciting. These pictures can vividly reflect all aspects and details of the life of the Han Dynasty people. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs depict the scene of the tomb owner and his family feasting together, showing the atmosphere of family harmony and strong family affection.

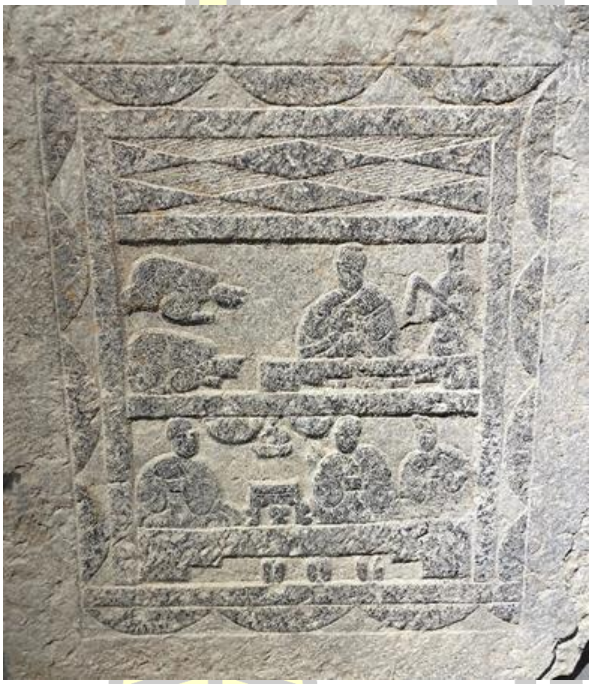

Figure 16 It shows people feasting on couches in the Han Dynasty
Source: Photographed by researcherr (April 2024)

As shown in Figure 16 "Sitting on the Couch Feasting", in the feasting scene, people sit around the table, which is full of food and wine vessels, showing a lively and joyful family gathering. Some Han Dynasty stone reliefs are engraved with scenes of music and dance performances, showing the rich entertainment life of the Han Dynasty people. The musicians play instruments and the dancers dance gracefully, creating a cheerful atmosphere, reflecting the Han Dynasty people's love for music and dance.

In the display of the images of the Han Dynasty's houses, warehouses, kitchens,

etc., the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shandong, Jiangsu and other places are more prominent. The images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang, Henan are relatively rich. In Figure 17, "Enjoying Music", several people sit cross-legged on the ground. The accuracy, dexterity and thrill of their movements are amazing, and we still find it difficult to "restore" them.

Figure 17 This shows a scene of people feasting and enjoying music.
Source: Photographed by researcherr (April 2024)

Table 2 Introduction to the subject classification, content and source of the Han Dynasty stone relief art

theme	content	Source
Celestial themes	The sun, the moon, the stars, the constellations, the wind, the rain, the thunder, the lightning, the cloud patterns, the sun and the moon shining together, the Big Dipper, the winged man	The Han people's understanding of the universe, astronomical observations, religious beliefs, philosophical thoughts, and the concept of "harmony between man and nature"
Ghost theme	Nuwa, Fuxi, Queen Mother of the West, ancestral gods, family guardian gods, scenes of exorcising ghosts and warding	The Han people's belief in gods, yin-yang philosophy, concepts of life and death, and the influence of Taoism and folk beliefs

	off evil spirits, spells, auspicious animals	
Auspicious themes	Praying for blessings and good fortune, auspicious things, auspicious patterns, the emperor and auspicious symbols	Influenced by the Confucian theory of "correspondence between heaven and man", it reflects people's pursuit of happiness and a better life.
Historical Stories	Confucius meets Laozi, Su Wu herds sheep, Zhang Qian's mission to the Western Regions, the reign of Emperor Wen and Emperor Jing, Duke Zhou assists in government, and Dayu controls floods	Historical events, folk tales, literary works
Horse-drawn travel theme	Scenes of emperors, officials and nobles traveling by carriage, luxurious carriages, funerals	The symbols of travel, etiquette system, social structure, and cultural life in Han Dynasty society
Scenes showing the life of the tomb owner	Banquet scenes, music and dance performances, houses, warehouses, cooking and kitchens, acrobatics, music and dance, etc.	Daily life, family activities, entertainment methods, religious beliefs, and love and yearning for a better life of the Han people

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.03)

Analysis and summary

This chapter outlines the background, definition and rich themes of Han Dynasty stone relief art. The Han Dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD) was an important unified dynasty

in Chinese history, divided into the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty, with great prosperity in politics, economy and culture. Han Dynasty stone relief art was mainly used in tombs and funeral buildings. It is an exquisite stone carving art that reflects people's understanding of life, the universe and the afterlife. Its content themes include celestial phenomena, gods and ghosts, auspicious signs, historical stories, travel by car and horse, and the life of the tomb owner, etc., showing the rich religious beliefs, philosophical thoughts and social culture of the Han Dynasty. Through carving techniques, stone reliefs show the exploration of the real and mysterious world by the Han people. It not only records history, but also inherits morality and culture. It is a combination of classical realism and romanticism.

2.2 Geographical space of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The geospatial analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is an important aspect of studying Han Dynasty stone relief art, because it can reveal the distribution characteristics, artistic style and cultural background of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in different regions. Because the distribution of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is not uniform, there are significant differences in style, theme and expression techniques in Han Dynasty stone reliefs in different regions. Through geospatial analysis, researcher can identify these differences and explore the reasons behind them (Zhu Cunming, 2013, p.14-22)

2.2.1 Regional distribution and characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The distribution of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in China is widespread, but they are mainly concentrated in Shandong Province, Henan Province, Jiangsu Province, Shanxi Province, Sichuan Province and other regions (Figure 18). Due to historical, cultural, and economic factors, these regions have become the main sites for the unearthing of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

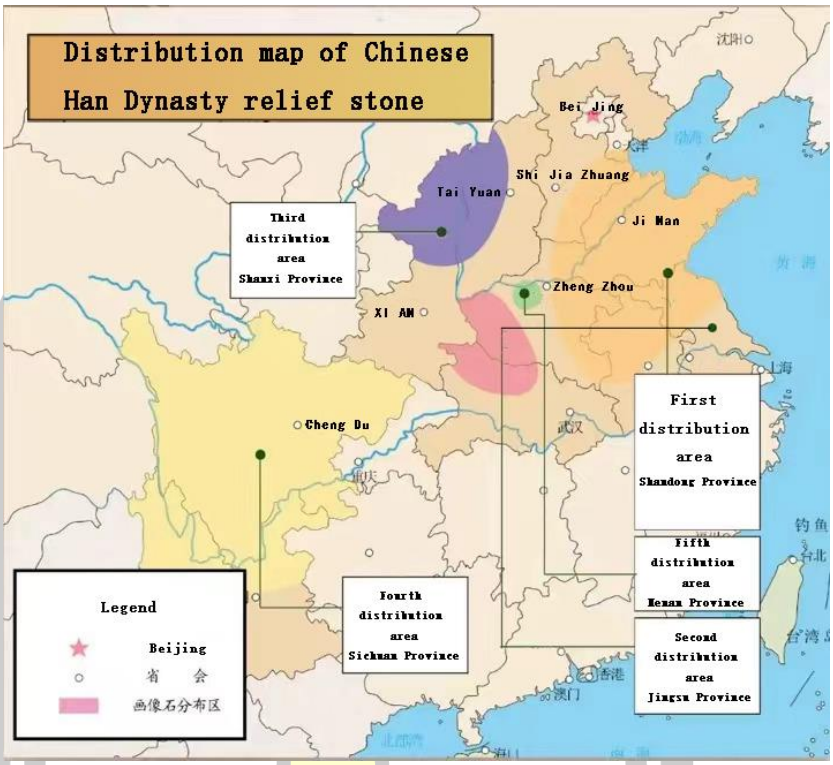

Figure 18 Distribution of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Source: Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index? (April 2024)

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs are mainly concentrated in the Yellow River Basin and the Yangtze River Basin, with the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River Basin as the center, starting from the Jiaodong Peninsula in the east, to Gansu and Sichuan in the west, to Yulin in Shaanxi, Beijing, Liaoyang in Liaoning in the north, to Haining in Zhejiang and Zhaotong in Yunnan in the south. According to statistics, "more than 200 Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been discovered and excavated nationwide" (Zhu Cunming, 2013, p.14-22). "There are more than 50 tombs in Henan (Nanyang accounts for 44), more than 40 in Shandong, more than 30 in Jiangsu, more than 10 in Shaanxi, and nearly 10 in Shanxi" (Wang Jianzhong, 2001, p. 38). A certain number of Han Dynasty stone tombs or Han Dynasty stone carvings have also been unearthed in Anhui, Hubei, Zhejiang, Beijing, Tianjin, Gansu, Yunnan, and Guizhou. Sichuan and Chongqing mainly unearthed cliff tombs, Han Dynasty ques, stone coffins, and stone coffins. With the continuous discovery of Han tombs and the excavation of

Han Dynasty stone carvings in recent years, the total number of Han Dynasty stone carvings in the country is about 15,000.

Through comparison and analysis, we can clearly see the artistic characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in various distribution areas and the exchanges and influences between various distribution areas in the production technology of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

2.2.1.1 Shandong region

Shandong is one of the most important areas for the excavation of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, especially in Jiaxiang. Jiaxiang Han Dynasty stone reliefs are famous for their rich themes and fine carvings, covering myths and legends, historical stories, social life and other aspects.

Among the more than 110 counties and cities in the province, it is known that more than 50 counties and cities have Han Dynasty stone reliefs. These counties and cities not only have luxuriously decorated Han Dynasty stone relief tombs underground, but also have exquisitely carved Han Dynasty stone relief temples and Han Dynasty stone relief ques on the ground. From the Phoenix stone carvings from the Yuanfeng period of Emperor Zhaodi, the standing crane image on the stone carvings of Lu Xiaoyu in the third year of Heping in the reign of Emperor Chengdi, and the Western Han Dynasty stone carvings with five-zhu coins in Beidaliu, Feicheng, it can be proved that Shandong's Han Dynasty stone reliefs were produced as early as the middle and late Western Han Dynasty. Han Dynasty stone reliefs are distributed throughout the province, mainly in Jining, Zaozhuang, Linyi, Tai'an, Jinan, Weifang, Qingdao, Zibo, Yantai, Heze, Rizhao, and Guangrao. "If the brick reliefs are not counted, there are a total of 58 counties and cities." (Li Falin, 1983, P59) Han Dynasty stone reliefs were unearthed. In terms of regions, Jining has the most, with 11 counties having unearthed stone reliefs.

2.2.1.2 Jiangsu Province

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Anhui Province mainly reflect the religious

beliefs and daily life of the Han Dynasty society. They are characterized by delicate carving techniques and rich content.

Northern Jiangsu is one of the regions with the most concentrated Han Dynasty stone reliefs in China. Geographically, it includes the Su-Lu mountainous area of Xuzhou City and neighboring counties and the Jianghuai Plain in Huaiyin and Yangzhou. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Northern Jiangsu are mainly concentrated in Xuzhou in the north of Jiangsu Province. They are connected to the southern part of Shandong in terms of geography and the style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and are basically similar to those in southern Shandong."Han Dynasty stone reliefs were unearthed in northern Jiangsu as early as the reigns of Emperor Qianlong and Emperor Tongzhi (Li Falin, 1983, p. 59)

The "Xuzhou Prefecture Records" of the Tongzhi Period of the Qing Dynasty recorded the discovery of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Pei County, Xuzhou, but no scientific excavation has been carried out. During the Republic of China period, Mr. Zhang Boying, a famous calligrapher from Xuzhou, also collected some Han Dynasty stone reliefs. After the founding of New China, the scattered Han Dynasty stone reliefs were collected, and many new stones were discovered. At present, more than 20 complete Han Dynasty tomb reliefs have been discovered in Xuzhou, and a total of more than 500 Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been preserved.

The Han Dynasty stone carvings in northern Jiangsu have all been processed and smoothed, and most of them have been polished on the surface. The carving techniques that have been seen are manifested in the following four categories:

First, Yin line engraving. All objects are expressed with Yin lines. There are three situations: one is to carve thick lines outside the object without reducing the outer contour of the object, and then carve thin lines inside the object, such as the portraits in Xiongshan Tomb in Lianyungang City; the second is to use vertical lines as decoration outside the object, such as the Han Dynasty portrait stone in Shandong Museum (Figure 19) ; the third is to use pockmarks outside the object to distinguish the texture, such as

the portraits in Xiazhenmu, Weishan, a suburb of Xuzhou.

Figure 19 It shows two warriors fighting, using the intaglio engraving method.
Source: Photographed by researcher at Shandong Museum (July 2023)

Second, flat relief. The ground outside the image is reduced, but the image is still flat, and the details inside the image are engraved with negative lines. The depth of the reduction can be different. The shallow one is slightly increased or reduced outside the image, especially near the outline, so that the image is slightly presented, such as the portraits in the Hanshan Tomb in Xuzhou City. The deep one is like the portraits in the Yanzibu Tomb in Qiu County.

Third, convex bas-relief. The outline of the object is carved out, and then the undulating details are carved out with negative lines inside the object. The outline around the object is chiseled into an arc surface, and the outer part of the object is carved out deeply to make the object more prominent, such as the portraits in the Baishan Guzi Tomb in Qiu County and the Maocun Tomb in Tongshan County.

Fourth, round sculpture, or openwork sculpture, refers to the carving of certain parts of an object into three-dimensional shapes, such as the bear on the pillar of Tomb No. 1 in Changli, Donghai County, the woman holding a child on the niche, and the

sheep column base of the pillar of Qingshanquan Tomb in Tongshan County.

2.2.1.3 Shanxi Province and Shaanxi Province

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shaanxi are mainly concentrated in Hanzhong. Most of them are murals and stone carvings in tombs. The contents they express are mainly religious beliefs, myths and legends, and the life stories of the tomb owners.

Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces are adjacent to each other from east to west, separated by the Yellow River. Northern Shaanxi and Western Shanxi are two adjacent Han Dynasty stone relief areas separated by a river. They are located on the northern edge of the Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi. They are loess hilly areas with overlapping hills and gullies. The two areas are large. The Great Wall is the boundary, and the north is bounded by endless sand dunes and grasslands. In the whole country, the two provinces are the third distribution of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in China and are an area that was formed and developed independently.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shaanxi are mainly distributed in the Yulin area in northern Shaanxi and the Wuding River Basin, with the largest number in Mizhi and Suide. They have also been found in Yulin City in the north, Shenmu, Wubao, Qingjian County in the east, Zizhou, Hengshan, and Jingbian County in the west. "Since the 1950s, a number of Han Dynasty stone relief tombs have been discovered in Suide, Mizhi, and Yulin in northern Shaanxi, and a number of scattered unearthed Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been collected. Their subject matter and artistic style are similar to those of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Lishi, Shanxi. Therefore, northern Shaanxi and northwestern Shanxi are regarded as another concentrated area for the distribution of Han Dynasty stone relief tombs (Liu Yong, Liu Yefei, Liu Fenshan, Ai Qiang & Yang Hong, 2015, p.12-16)."

According to existing discoveries, all the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in this area came from Mu burials, and the types of the curtain chambers are divided into two types: single-chamber vaulted curtain and front and back double-chamber Mu.

Single-chamber vaulted tombs are generally 4 meters long and 2 meters wide, and

some have small brick-structured side chambers outside the tomb door. Front-back double-chamber tombs are about 7 meters long, with the front chamber dome-shaped and the rear chamber vaulted. More complex double-chamber tombs have single-side chambers with vaults or left-right double-side chambers attached to the sides of the front chamber. Most of the Han Dynasty stone tombs with reliefs in northern Shaanxi are pure stone tombs that imitate brick and stone structures. Except for the tomb door, rear chamber door, and side chamber door, which are constructed with regular stone materials, the chamber walls and chamber roofs are built with brick-shaped stone pieces. The Han Dynasty stone tombs with reliefs in western Shanxi are mainly brick-stone mixed structures. The tomb door, rear chamber door, and side chamber door are constructed with whole pieces of stone, while the chamber walls and chamber roofs are built with long strips of bricks. The shape of this tomb structure determines that the reliefs must be engraved on the door caps, door pillars, and door leaves of the tomb door, rear chamber door, or side chamber door without exception. The door caps usually depict scenes of chariots and horses traveling, sacrificial ceremonies or ascension to heaven. The upper part of the door pillars usually has images of immortals such as the King of the East and the Queen Mother of the West, while the lower part has doormen or other mythical beasts. The door leaves are usually engraved with images of door knockers holding rings and the Vermilion Bird (Hu Qin, 2010, p.110-114).

The carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shaanxi and Shanxi can be summarized into the following four types: (1) deep ground plane carving (2) reduced ground plane carving, (3) ground plane line carving, and (4) deep ground plane carving. Among them, deep ground plane carving is the most important carving technique in Shaanxi, also known as "shoveling ground convex surface carving". The rubbings of this type of Han Dynasty stone reliefs have a strong silhouette effect, solemn and deep, bright and eye-catching, making the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in this area famous for this distinctive feature. There are very few works in northern Shaanxi that combine ground plane line carving with negative line carving. The carving techniques of Han

Dynasty stone reliefs in Lishi area in western Shanxi are mainly deep ground plane carving and shallow ground plane carving. The shallow ground plane carving technique became popular after Emperor Huan, and gradually replaced the traditional deep ground plane carving, becoming the main carving technique in northern Shaanxi.

The most prominent feature of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in this area is the wide decorative pattern bands added to the edges of the pictures. "Among the 66 Han Dynasty stone reliefs found in Dabaodang, 24 have borders, and the Han Dynasty stone reliefs with borders account for 36.4% of the total Han Dynasty stone reliefs." [12]Another structural feature is that many stone strips are divided into grids of varying sizes, and then the subject matter is appropriately arranged in each grid, and the content is not connected. Such a grid method is relatively rare in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In addition, it can be seen from the Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Dabaodang, Shenmu in 1996 that the craftsmen used patterns such as "templates" when drafting the composition, which is also a major feature of the production of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in this area.

2.2.1.4 Henan Province

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs found in Henan Province were primarily used to adorn tomb murals and sarcophagus decorations, serving as lasting tributes to the deceased. These reliefs often depict scenes from the tomb owner's life, including activities they engaged in, aspects of family life, and various mythological stories. Through these images, the reliefs reflect the social customs, beliefs, and values of the time, offering a glimpse into the daily lives and spiritual world of the Han Dynasty.

Henan Province is particularly rich in these historical artifacts, with over half of the 18 cities in the region yielding discoveries of Han Dynasty tomb reliefs or stone reliefs within urban areas. Among these, Nanyang City stands out as the most significant, both in terms of the quantity and the historical importance of the unearthed

[12] Compiled by Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology and Yulin Municipal Cultural Relics Management Committee Office: "Archaeological Report on Han Dynasty City Sites and Tombs", Science Press, 2001 edition, pages 120-121.

reliefs. In fact, Nanyang is recognized as the city with the most Han Dynasty stone reliefs discovered not only in Henan but throughout the entire country.

The first documented excavation of a Han Dynasty stone relief tomb in Nanyang took place in Caodian, Nanyang County, in 1932. Since then, more than 3,000 stone reliefs from the Han Dynasty have been discovered and collected in the region. These are distributed across 10 counties and cities, including Wolong District, Wancheng District, Tanghe County, and Dengzhou City, with a significant concentration around Wan County and Nanyang County. This area is notably the hometown of Emperor Guangwu of the Han Dynasty, Liu Xiu, adding further historical significance to the findings.

In addition to Nanyang, Shangqiu is another area in Henan Province where Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been found. These reliefs are primarily concentrated in regions that were near the ancient states of Liang, Chen, and Pei during the reign of Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang. This geographic distribution of stone reliefs highlights the cultural and political importance of these areas during the Han Dynasty, reflecting the influence and reach of the Han emperors across different regions of the empire (Wu Zhenfeng, 2006, p., 53-69).

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang are mainly concentrated in the hometown of Emperor Guangwu of the Han Dynasty, Liu Xiu (now in Taisuowan County, Nanyang County). The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shangqiu are mainly concentrated in the areas near the Liang, Chen and Pei states during the reign of Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang.

2.2.1.5 Sichuan Province

The distribution of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Sichuan is mainly concentrated in the "Land of Abundance". The Han Dynasty stone reliefs produced here are not only numerous but also exquisite. There are many types of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Sichuan, including stone towers, stone coffins, stone boxes, cliff tombs and other carving forms. These Han Dynasty stone reliefs are a symbol of the economic

prosperity of the Han Dynasty and a product of the lavish burial style. The cliff tombs and Han Dynasty stone relief coffins that remain in Sichuan are not seen or are rare in other regions. The lower limit of their popularity may be as late as the Three Kingdoms period (221AD-263 AD)

Figure 20 Picture showing a journey by carriage and horse.
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (May 2024)

The distribution characteristics and causes of the Han Dynasty relief stones (Figure 20) in Sichuan and Chongqing are closely related to the economic prosperity of the region. Sichuan and Chongqing were formerly known as Bashu, with rich products and a large population. As early as the Han Dynasty, they were known as the "Land of Abundance". After the unification of the Qin and Han Dynasties, a series of measures such as setting up counties, developing water conservancy, repairing plank roads, and immigrating to Bashu were adopted, which enabled the economy of Bashu to enter a new stage of development. The policy of recuperation in the early Han Dynasty further promoted the rapid development of agriculture and handicrafts in Bashu, especially the

ironmaking, salt making, and textile industries, which were famous all over the world.

The development of social economy has driven the prosperity of the city. Chengdu in the Han Dynasty was known as the "Jinguan City" and was one of the six largest cities in China. It was famous for its commerce, handicrafts, lacquerware and Shu cloth markets. The rich economic foundation provided support for the development of culture and art in the Bashu region, especially the prosperity of the stone relief art in the Han Dynasty.

The subject matter and carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Sichuan mainly reflect the richness and diversity of regional culture, religious beliefs, social life and nature worship. The following is a detailed explanation of these contents:

Common themes of Han Dynasty relief stone in Sichuan include images of gods and immortals in Taoism and folk beliefs, sacrificial scenes, and images related to ghosts and gods. These contents reflect people's worship of supernatural powers and belief in the afterlife at that time. Common themes include images of immortals, winged people, and spirit animals. These images not only show people's reverence for Taoist gods, but also show the popularity and influence of Taoist thought at that time.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Sichuan also depict a large number of social life scenes, such as banquets, hunting, farming, handicrafts, etc. These scenes truly reproduce the daily life and social activities of people in Sichuan during the Han Dynasty, showing the prosperity and diversity of the society at that time. Agricultural and handicraft themes are particularly common, which is closely related to the rich agriculture and developed handicrafts in Sichuan (Ji Zhouli, 2023, p.98-101).

Some Han Dynasty relief stones are also engraved with historical stories and myths and legends, such as Fuxi, Nuwa, Yao and Shun, etc. These themes not only show the importance that people in the Han Dynasty attached to history and legends, but also show the attention paid by the society at that time to ethics and morals and the function of enlightenment.

Relief is one of the main carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in

Sichuan, usually in the form of a combination of high relief and shallow relief. The high relief part is prominent and has a strong sense of three-dimensionality, while the shallow relief part pays more attention to the depiction of details, with smooth lines and clear layers. The use of shallow relief technology makes the picture more layered, which is suitable for expressing complex scenes and delicate textures.

Line carving is a common auxiliary technique, often used to depict the details of people's clothing, architectural structures and natural scenery. Line carving has smooth lines and strong expressiveness. It is often used in combination with relief techniques to enhance the details and expressiveness of the picture. Sichuan Han Dynasty stone reliefs often use a combination of multiple techniques, with exquisite carving skills and vivid pictures. The use of this comprehensive technique makes the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only have extremely high artistic value, but also show the superb level of stone carving technology in Sichuan during the Han Dynasty.

In general, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Sichuan have a wide range of themes, rich and diverse content, and sophisticated carving techniques. These Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only important physical materials for studying the social life, religious beliefs and artistic styles of the Han Dynasty, but also reflect the unique cultural background and artistic achievements of the Sichuan region at that time (Tang Lin, 2014, p.160-166).

Table 3 Geographical distribution, content and influencing factors of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Region	Artistic Style Characteristics	Subject Matter	Formation Reasons
Shandong	Strong realism, rich scenes, minimal religious elements	Social life, historical stories, myths, banquets, chariot rides, hunting, music and dance performances	Cultural center, developed economy, rich social life, Confucian influence emphasizing realism and ethical values

Henan	Simple and unadorned, diverse content, significant religious elements	Myths, historical stories, daily life scenes, Taoist myths, immortals' imagery	Origin of Central Plains culture, deep influence of religious thought, especially Taoism, diverse cultural integration leading to varied and symbolic artistic styles
Sichuan	Delicate and refined, unique themes, dynamic and lively	Local myths, flora and fauna, music, banquets, hunting, decorative patterns	Isolated geographical location in the Ba-Shu region, unique regional culture, Ba-Shu culture emphasizes enjoyment and rich life, skilled craftsmanship
Shaanxi	Grand and majestic, military and political themes, mysterious elements	Military scenes, life of emperors and generals, rituals, hunting, myths	Political center, influenced by imperial power and military culture, artistic style emphasizes imperial aura and national power, geographical and military needs fostered a grand and majestic artistic style

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.03)

2.2.2 The natural environment of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

(1) External environment of the Han Dynasty tomb

Geographic location and selection. Han Dynasty tombs were usually located on hills or highlands. Such locations were not only higher than the surrounding terrain, but

more importantly, they were in line with the concept of Feng Shui. Tombs are often surrounded by green mountains, and the hillsides are lush with vegetation and full of vitality. Choosing a place close to mountains and rivers can not only ensure the peace of the tomb owner in the underworld, but also ensure the prosperity of his descendants. Hills and highlands can not only prevent floods, but also symbolize nobility and longevity. When selecting a site, there are often special Feng Shui masters who survey the terrain to ensure that the location of the tomb can gather the "dragon vein" [13]and bring good luck.

Tomb passage and burial mound. There is a long tomb passage in front of the tomb chamber. This passage is usually spacious and flat. There may be exquisite stone carvings or tall tombstones on both sides, engraved with the life story and achievements of the tomb owner. At the end of the tomb passage is the entrance to the tomb chamber, which is solemn and dignified (Figure 21). The burial mound is piled above the tomb passage, covering the tomb chamber to form a large mound, symbolizing the protection and respect for the tomb owner. These burial mounds not only prevent erosion by rainwater, but also mark the location of the tomb chamber, making it particularly eye-catching in the vast land.

[13] Dragon veins refer to undulating mountains. Because mountains are similar to dragons in many aspects, Chinese Feng Shui compares mountains to dragons. In ancient Chinese traditional geomancy , "dragon veins" are regarded as a special geographical form.

Figure 21 Ancient tomb unearthed in Guojiazhuang, Shangcai County, Henan Province

Source: Photo taken on March 10, 2023, at an ancient tomb unearthed in Guojiazhuang, Shangcai County, Henan Province

The entrance to the tomb. The entrance to the tomb is usually equipped with a solid stone or brick door, and a statue of a guardian animal may be placed in front of the door. These animals are mostly mighty lions or unicorns, which are believed to be able to ward off evil and protect the tomb from intrusion. Various exquisite patterns and words are often engraved on the stone door. The entrance is solemn and dignified, giving people a sense of sacredness and inviolability.

Facilities around the tomb. Some ancillary buildings or facilities are built around the tomb, such as the sacrificial platform and sacrificial hall. These buildings are used by descendants to worship regularly and express their respect and remembrance for their ancestors. Various offerings are often placed on the sacrificial platform, and incense is burning. In the sacrificial hall, tablets and portraits of ancestors are displayed for descendants to admire.

Underground passages. Some large tombs have underground passages, which are usually designed to be very hidden to prevent tomb robbers. The underground passages are complex and lead to the interior of the tomb. Sometimes there are mechanisms and

traps to increase the safety of the tomb. Various patterns and texts may be engraved on the walls of the passages, recording the life and family history of the tomb owner.

Figure 22 Original model of tomb type in the middle Han Dynasty
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

In general, the external environment of the tombs of the Han Dynasty was exquisitely designed (Figure 22), focusing on both practical protection functions and symbolic meanings. The location of the tombs was based on Feng Shui, the tomb passage and the mound symbolically protected the tomb owner, the cemetery design reflected the status and identity of the tomb owner, the tomb entrance and the guardian beasts ensured the safety of the tomb, and the underground passages and burial pits increased the mystery and historical value of the tomb. These designs reflected the importance people attached to the afterlife and the respect for the status of the tomb owner at that time (Bu Youchang, 2024, p.117-120)

(2) The interior environment of the Han Dynasty tomb

The interior of a Han Dynasty tomb is usually divided into several main areas, including the front room, middle room, back room and side room, each with different functions. The front room is generally used to place offerings and sacrificial supplies, and is the main place for family members to worship their ancestors. The front room is simply decorated but fully functional, with various sacrificial utensils such as incense burners, altars and offering tables. The middle room is the main coffin placement area for the tomb owner, located in the center of the tomb. This area is solemnly decorated and usually contains the main coffin and multiple layers of coffins that symbolize nobility. Funerary objects that symbolize wealth and status may be placed around the coffin. The back room and side rooms are used to place funerary objects and coffins of other family members. The side rooms may also store some particularly important items or documents (Yang Aiguo, 2001, p.14-16).

The walls of tombs from the Han Dynasty are often adorned with intricate carvings or paintings that serve multiple purposes, both aesthetic and symbolic (Figure 23). These artistic depictions are far more than mere decorations; they are a rich tapestry of visual storytelling that reflects the life, beliefs, and values of the tomb's occupant.

Among the most prominent features of these murals are the life scenes of the tomb owner. These scenes often depict the individual in various stages of life, engaging in activities that were significant to them.

พหุน ปณ ฑิโต ชีเว

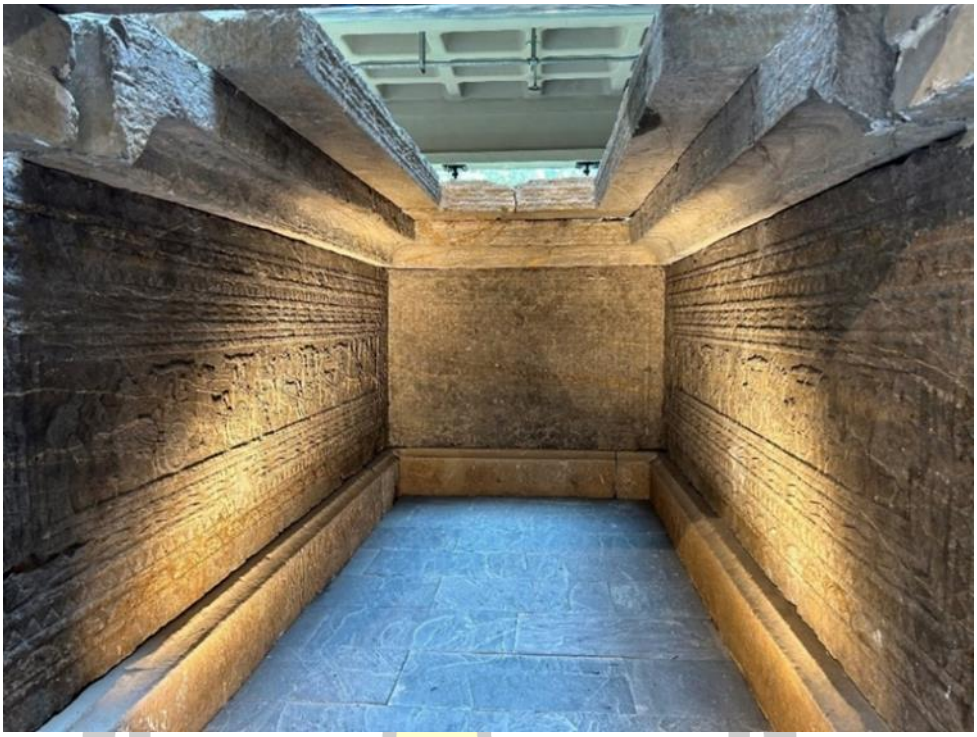

Figure 23 Han Dynasty stone reliefs inside a Han Dynasty stone relief tomb
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

For example, the walls of some tombs may be painted with scenes of the tomb owner participating in important ceremonies or hunting, showing his researcherity and status. In addition, the walls of some high-level tombs are inlaid with exquisite stone or brick carvings, including birds, animals, flowers, trees, etc. The carvings are very exquisite, reflecting the superb level of Han Dynasty art.

The Nanyang Han Dynasty stone tomb with reliefs was discovered in 2002. The tomb faces south and is a single-chamber stone tomb with a "convex" shape. It consists of a corridor, a tomb door and a tomb chamber. The tomb chamber is 2.28 meters wide from east to west and 3.86 meters long from north to south according to the outer wall. There are 8 (Figures 26-27) bas-reliefs in the tomb chamber. The themes include auspicious images, warding off evil spirits, and traveling by carriage and horse.

Figure 24 Han Dynasty stone reliefs inside a Han Dynasty stone tomb
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

The bas-relief carvings of the Han Dynasty tomb in Nanyang (Fig. 24) provide a fascinating glimpse into the elaborate and symbolic artistry that characterized this period. With a total of eight distinct images, these carvings encapsulate a wide range of themes that reflect both the spiritual and material concerns of the Han people. The themes include auspicious symbols meant to bring good fortune, images intended to ward off evil spirits, depictions of the deceased traveling by carriage and horse, and figures of gatekeepers who were believed to guard the entrance to the tomb and protect the tomb's occupants in the afterlife.

In addition to these symbolic carvings, some high-level tombs of the Han Dynasty were designed with specialized areas that catered to various aspects of the tomb owner's afterlife needs. These areas were meticulously crafted to ensure that the tomb owner's existence in the underworld would be as comfortable and dignified as possible.

One of the most significant features of these tombs was the resting area. This space often included stone beds and stone chairs, which were not merely functional but also

symbolic of the tomb owner's continued status and comfort in the afterlife. The presence of such furnishings suggests that the Han people believed in a form of life after death that closely mirrored their earthly existence, where rest and relaxation were as necessary in the underworld as they were in life.

Figure 25 Tomb chamber with stone reliefs

Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

Chefu Mountain is located 60 kilometers northeast of Xuzhou City. The Han Dynasty tomb (Figure 25) is 200 meters east of Bu Shang Village, Chefu Mountain Township, Pizhou City. It was discovered in 1999. It is a mixed brick and stone structure. The tomb door faces north,and the plane is in the shape of a "". It consists of a tomb passage, a tomb door, a front room, a back room, and left and right-side rooms. 23 Han Dynasty relief stones were unearthed. The tomb is 6.3 meters long from north to south and 5 meters wide from east to west. Han Dynasty tombs were built in imitation of ground buildings, using the front hall and back-room system. The front hall is a place for meeting guests and is relatively spacious; the back room is called "", which is a place for rest. Only by entering the hall can you enter the room. The entrance of the hall is called "door", the entrance between the hall and the room is called "house", and the window between the hall and the room is called "window". According to the ancient

etiquette, the door is biased to the east and the window is biased to the west. There are side rooms on the left and right of the front hall, the kitchen on the east and the storage on the west. The top of the tomb chamber adopts a chie-shaped brick vault roof, and the vault roof technology increases the indoor space height. Ancient burial customs: before Emperor Wu of Han, people were buried together in different tombs, while after Emperor Wu of Han, people were buried together in the same tomb

The interior of the tomb is richly decorated, and paintings and carvings are often used to beautify the environment. Paintings are mostly in bright red, yellow, blue and other colors, and the patterns are mainly cloud patterns, dragons and phoenixes, flowers and plants, symbolizing auspiciousness and wealth. Sculptures are mostly reliefs or round sculptures, and the contents include myths and legends, religious beliefs, animal totems, etc., showing a strong cultural atmosphere. The decoration not only plays a role in beautifying the tomb, but also conveys the tomb owner's yearning for a better life and his awe of the gods (Luo Erhu, 2000, pp. 31-62).

To prevent water accumulation in the tomb, some high-level tombs are also designed with a complete drainage system. The drainage ditch is usually located under the floor of the tomb, and the accumulated water is led out of the tomb through underground pipes to keep the inside of the tomb dry and clean. These drainage systems are cleverly designed, hidden and effective, ensuring the long-term preservation of the tomb environment.

Although tombs generally have no natural light sources, some tombs may have lamp niches designed inside to place oil lamps or candles. These lighting facilities can not only be used when the tomb owner is buried, but also provide lighting for future generations to enter the tomb to worship. The location of the lamp niche is usually designed reasonably to provide sufficient light without affecting the overall appearance and layout of the tomb.The interior design of the tombs of the Han Dynasty was exquisite (Figure 26) , which fully reflects the importance people attached to the afterlife and the respect for the status of the tomb owner. From the layout to the

decoration, every detail is full of symbolic meaning and practical value, showing the cultural level and craftsmanship of the Han Dynasty society.

Figure 26 Display of tomb chamber structure and stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

The rich and colorful funerary objects and exquisite decorations inside the sarcophagus (Figure 27) also provide valuable information for future generations to study the history and culture of the Han Dynasty.

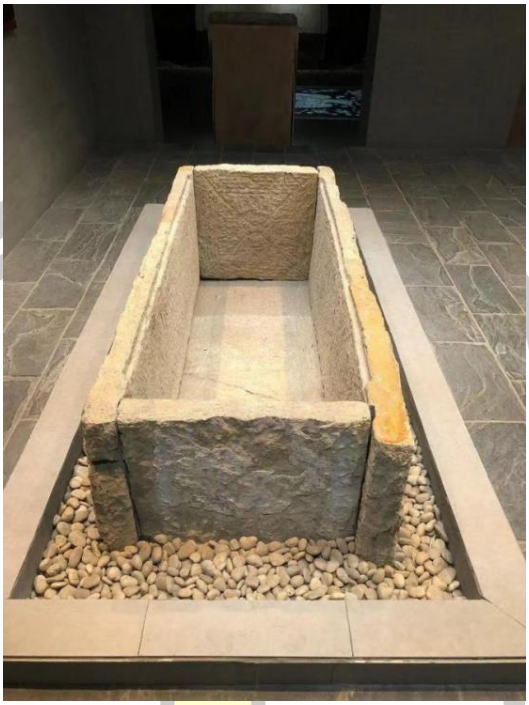

Figure 27 The Stone Coffin with Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Source: Photographed by researcher at the Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Picture Museum (April 2024)

Summary

This chapter discusses the geographical distribution and characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and analyzes the styles and cultural backgrounds of stone reliefs in different regions. Han Dynasty stone reliefs are widely distributed in Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, Sichuan and other places, but the styles vary significantly from place to place. The stone reliefs in Shandong are famous for their delicate carvings and rich themes, while those in northern Jiangsu are mainly simple in style and religious content. The stone reliefs in Shaanxi and Shanxi are characterized by majestic momentum and military themes, while the stone reliefs in Sichuan are unique in style and diverse in content, including social life, nature worship, etc. By comparing the stone reliefs in various places, researcher can further understand the culture, religious beliefs and artistic exchanges in different regions of the Han Dynasty.

2.3 The development process of stone relief

2.3.1 The origin and early development of stone reliefs

The Warring States Period (475 BC - 221 BC) was an important stage in Chinese history. During this period, the vassal states coexisted and fought against each other, which was full of turmoil and disputes, and wars broke out frequently between countries. At that time, people of all ethnic groups were extremely active in communication, and all regions of the country were constantly absorbing and integrating cultural elements from other regions, actively learning and drawing on each other's strengths. Therefore, it provided a unique development opportunity for the emerging art form of stone relief (the stone reliefs of this period cannot be called Han Dynasty stone reliefs).

As a new art form, stone reliefs were first used for tomb decoration. Their purpose was to pray for blessings and symbolize the status and identity of the tomb owner during his lifetime through stone carvings. The emergence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in tombs reflects the importance people attached to karma, reincarnation and religious beliefs during the Warring States Period. The themes of Han Dynasty stone reliefs during this period were relatively simple, mostly geometric patterns and animal patterns. These patterns usually have symbolic meanings. Geometric patterns may symbolize the universe and order, while animal patterns may represent strength and protection. The choice of these patterns reflects the beliefs and aesthetic concepts of people at that time. Its technical features are mainly shallow relief and line engraving.

The stone reliefs of this period were mainly concentrated in Shandong, Henan and other places. These regions had developed economies and abundant stone resources, which provided conditions for the development of stone reliefs.

In short, the stone reliefs of the Warring States Period are not only an innovation in artistic form, but also a product of cultural exchange and integration. Through these Han Dynasty stone reliefs, we can see the process of cultural mutual learning and mutual influence among countries during the Warring States Period. The patterns and patterns on the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the religious beliefs, aesthetic concepts,

and people's understanding and expectations of life in the society at that time, and also laid the foundation for the stone carving art of later generations. Although the early Han Dynasty stone reliefs were relatively simple in subject matter and techniques, the cultural significance and artistic value they contained cannot be ignored. As time went on, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs gradually grew and developed in later dynasties and became an important part of ancient Chinese art (Zhu Yanmin, 2021, p.58-61).

After the Warring States Period, the Qin Dynasty was also an important stage in the origin and development of the early Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The Qin Dynasty (221 BC - 207 BC) was the first unified feudal dynasty in Chinese history. The Qin Dynasty ended the situation of the separatist rule of the princes for 500 years since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, and became the first centralized state in Chinese history. Under the background of the Qin Dynasty's unification and centralized system, the art of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty was further developed. Although there are few remains of Qin Dynasty stone reliefs, the development of Qin Dynasty stone carving art can be seen through the stone carvings in the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Pit of the Mausoleum of Qin Shihuang and related archaeological discoveries.

The craftsmanship of the Terracotta Warriors is very advanced. The craftsmen used a variety of techniques such as carving, molding and coloring to make each pottery figurine have a unique appearance and expression. Although the Terracotta Warriors are mainly pottery products, their production techniques laid the foundation for the later Han Dynasty stone relief art. In terms of technical inheritance and innovation, the production techniques of the Terracotta Warriors provided an important reference for the technical development of Han Dynasty stone relief. In terms of artistic style, the realistic style and meticulous carving techniques embodied in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs and the Terracotta Warriors were continued and carried forward in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The Han Dynasty stone relief art not only inherited the exquisite skills of the Qin Dynasty craftsmen, but also innovated the artistic style on this basis

(Jin Weino, 2003, p.44-46).

2.3.2 The prosperity and heyday of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty reached their peak in the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD). The Han Dynasty is mainly divided into two historical periods, the Western Han Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty. The Western Han Dynasty (206 BC - 8 AD) was a time of social stability and economic prosperity, and the art of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty gradually developed. Stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty were mainly used for tomb decoration, with themes including geometric patterns, animal patterns and simple mythological stories. With the development of social economy, the themes and techniques of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty gradually became richer. In the middle and late Western Han Dynasty, the art of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty entered a rapid development stage, and relief techniques began to be widely used, with smooth lines and clear layers of pictures. The themes of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty began to diversify. In addition to mythological stories, works that express social life, religious beliefs and historical events also appeared. The Eastern Han Dynasty (25 AD - 220 AD) was the heyday of the development of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty. The number and quality of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty reached the highest level in history, and were widely distributed in Shandong, Sichuan, Henan, Shaanxi and other places, becoming the mainstream form of tomb decoration. The artistic techniques of the stone reliefs in the Eastern Han Dynasty were extremely exquisite, with a combination of relief, line engraving, and intaglio engraving techniques. The pictures were clearly layered, with smooth lines and strong expressiveness. The craftsmen skillfully used light and shadow effects on the stone, giving the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty a strong sense of three-dimensionality and visual impact. Its themes are extremely rich, covering myths and legends, historical stories, religious beliefs, social life and other aspects. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty during this period are not only decorative artworks, but also carry rich cultural and social information, reflecting the ethics, religious beliefs, social customs and lifestyles of the time.

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty not only reflect the living customs and cultural beliefs of the Han Dynasty society, but also show people's imagination and hope for the afterlife. Their delicate carving techniques and high artistic expression make them important materials for studying the society, culture and art of the Han Dynasty. Through these stone carvings, future generations can get a glimpse of the social outlook and spiritual world of the Han Dynasty.

At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, with the intensification of social unrest and war, the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art was affected, but its artistic style and techniques continued and developed during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties (220 AD - 589 AD). During the Wei and Jin Dynasties (220 AD - 420 AD), Han Dynasty stone relief art continued to develop in the northern region. Although the number decreased, the techniques and style remained at a high level. The themes of Han Dynasty stone reliefs were more diverse and the expressions were richer, especially the Buddhist themes of stone carvings appeared in large numbers. The Han Dynasty stone relief art during this period was innovative in techniques, and craftsmen continued to explore carving techniques, forming a unique artistic style and expression method. Line engraving techniques were widely used during this period, with more delicate lines and stronger expressiveness.

2.3.3 Transformation and Continuity of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589 AD), the northern regimes were established one after another, and the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty continued to develop in the northern region. Especially under the rule of the Northern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty gradually integrated Buddhist art, and a large number of stone carvings with Buddhist themes appeared. During this period, the artistic style of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty changed, with smoother lines, more complex composition, and richer expression content (Figures 28 and 29) . The influence of Buddhist art was particularly significant, and Buddha statues, Bodhisattva statues, and Buddhist stories became important themes of the stone

reliefs of the Han Dynasty (Shi Xiaoying, 2023, p. 23-36).

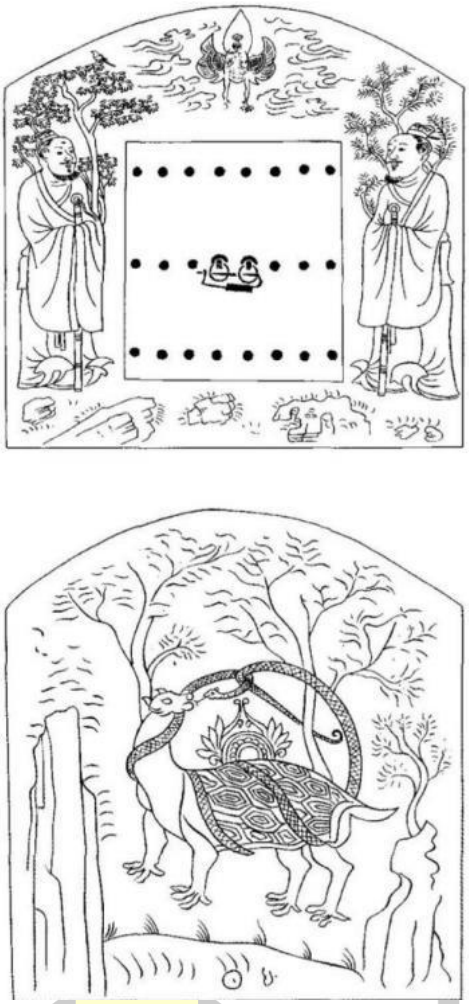

Figure 28 Front and rear panels of the sarcophagus in the tomb of Mr. Guo from the Northern Zhou Dynasty

Source: https://www.google.com/search ?

พหูน ปณ ฑิโต ชีเว

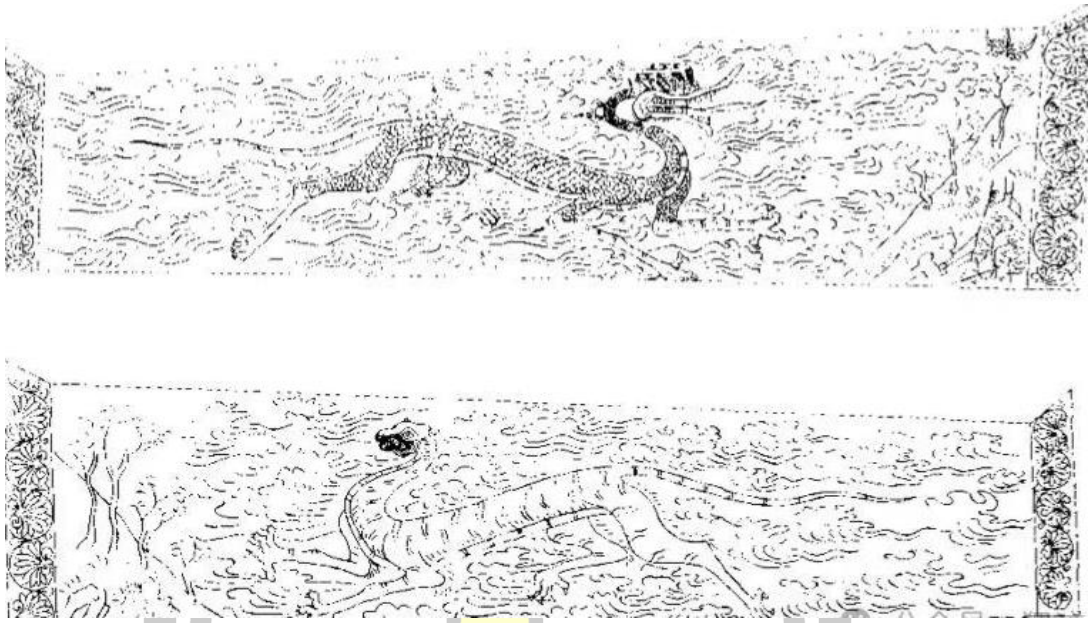

Figure 29 Left and right coffin baffles of the stone coffin in the tomb of Mr. Guo in the Northern Zhou Dynasty

Source: https://www.google.com/search ?

This " Sixty People in Yizi Statues" (Figure 30), which was made in the second year of Xiping in the Northern Wei Dynasty (517 AD), the image of Taishang Laojun is carved in the center of one side. Laojun wears a Taoist hat, a Taoist robe, a belt around his waist, a beard, and holds a whisk (a whisk for repelling mosquitoes). On both sides of Laojun are a tiger-like auspicious beasts, and each auspicious beast rides a person. These people have deep eyes, high noses, thick beards, and wear round-topped hats. They are obviously Hu people. On the other side of the stele, there is a seated Buddha in the center. The Buddha has a high fleshy bun, white hair, and his hands are in the mudra of giving wishes and the mudra of giving fearlessness. Below the seated Buddha, there are also tiger-like auspicious beasts on the left and right sides, and a Hu person rides on the right auspicious beast.

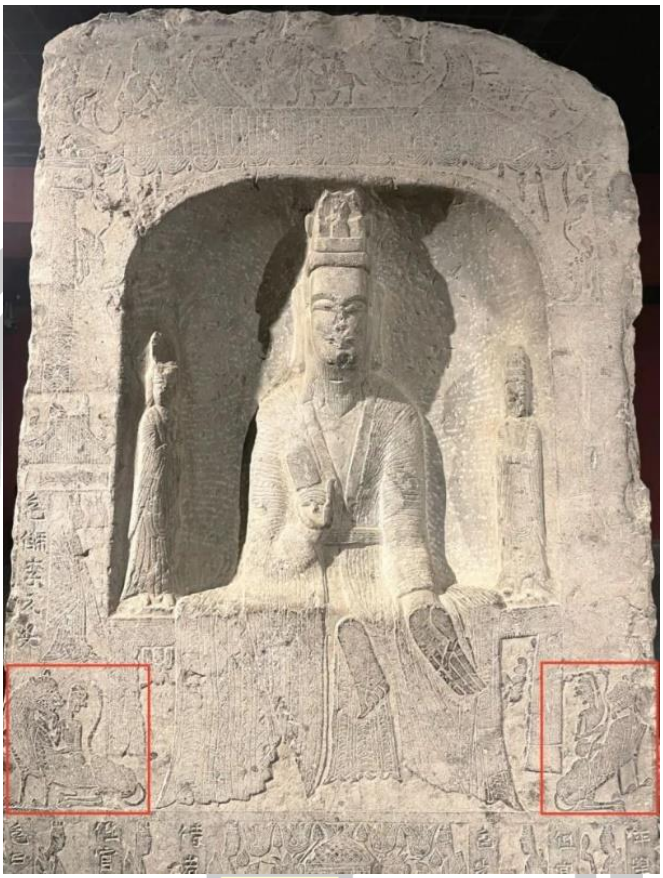

Figure 30 Northern Wei statue with a Hu figure
Source: https://www.google.com/search

In short, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties experienced significant development and changes. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty during this period not only inherited the traditions of the Han Dynasty, but also made innovations in style and subject matter, showing strong religious colors and myths and legends. During this period, Buddhist themes began to appear and gradually increased. The artistic style gradually changed from the early simplicity and simplicity to complexity and delicacy, with more vivid figures and smoother lines. The artistic styles of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in different regions are also different. The south pays more attention to details and decorativeness, while the north emphasizes majesty and power. Therefore, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties are not only a witness to the development of art, but

also a reflection of social, cultural and religious changes.

2.3.4 The decline and aftermath of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

During the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581-907 AD), with the changes in social system and cultural environment, the form of tomb decoration changed, and the Han Dynasty stone reliefs were gradually replaced by epitaphs and murals (Figure 31) . Although the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs gradually declined, the artistic style and techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs were still inherited in some areas, especially the cave art of the Tang Dynasty, such as the Dunhuang Grottoes and Longmen Grottoes, which inherited the techniques and style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and showed a high level of artistic achievement (Sui Xuejing, 2024, p.51-54).

Figure 31 Mural in Li Yong's Tomb, Tang Dynasty, Collection of Shaanxi Archaeological Institute, Tang Dynasty

Source: https://www.google.com/search ?

During the Five Dynasties, Song and Yuan Dynasties (907-1368 AD), the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty further declined, and tomb decorations were mainly epitaphs and murals. The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty was no longer the mainstream form of decoration. During this period, China's art forms became more diverse and richer, and art forms such as painting, calligraphy, and porcelain achieved

unprecedented development. However, the ancient art form of stone relief of the Han Dynasty was gradually replaced by new art forms and eventually withdrew from the stage of history.

Table 4 Analysis and summary of the historical development process of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Development Stage	Historical background	Art Style	Source
The Origin and Early Development of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits	During the Warring States Period (475 BC - 221 BC), cultural exchanges among countries were active, and many vassal states coexisted and fought against each other.	It is mainly composed of bas-relief and line engraving, with simple patterns, mostly geometric patterns and animal patterns, and has symbolic meaning.	Tomb decorations reflect the cycle of cause and effect and religious beliefs, and the patterns symbolize the universe, order, power and protection.
The prosperity and heyday of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty	The Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD), especially the Eastern Han Dynasty, was a time of social stability and economic prosperity.	The relief techniques are rich and varied, the lines are smooth, the layers are distinct, and it has a strong sense of three-dimensionality and visual impact.	The themes cover myths and legends, historical stories, religious beliefs, and social life, reflecting ethics, religious beliefs, social customs, and lifestyles.
The Transformation	During the Wei, Jin, Southern and	Line engraving techniques are widely	Buddhist themes, a large number of

and Continuation of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits	Northern Dynasties (220 AD - 589 AD), society was turbulent and artistic styles were integrated with Buddhist art.	used, with delicate lines, complex composition and rich content. Buddhist themes occupy an important position, and the style changes from simple and rustic to complex	daily life scenes, historical stories, hunting, banquets, etc. reflect the religious colors and social and cultural changes.
The Decline and Remaining Charm of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits	During the Sui and Tang dynasties (581 AD - 907 AD), the style of tomb decoration changed, and the Han Dynasty stone reliefs were gradually replaced by epitaphs and murals.	Han Dynasty stone reliefs gradually declined but was passed down in cave art such as the Dunhuang Grottoes and the Longmen Grottoes.	Grotto art inherited the techniques and styles of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, but tomb decoration is mainly epitaphs and murals, mainstream form of decoration.

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

Analysis and Summary

The development of Han Dynasty stone reliefs went through its origin and early development in the Warring States Period, its prosperity and heyday in the Han Dynasty, and then its transformation and continuation in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. It finally declined and was replaced by other art forms in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Its content gradually enriched from simple geometric patterns and animal

patterns to myths and legends, historical stories and social life scenes, and its techniques became more and more sophisticated, reflecting the religious beliefs, cultural integration and evolution of artistic techniques in society.

2.4 The social environment of the Han Dynasty relief art flourishing and declining

2.4.1 The social environment in which the Han Dynasty stone relief flourished.

2.4.1.1 Political factors

The prosperity and development of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is the result of the combined effect of many factors, among which political factors played a crucial role. The political stability, policy support, the existence of local power and the diversity of local culture in the Han Dynasty all provided a solid foundation for the prosperity of Han Dynasty stone relief art. The following will elaborate on the political factors that led to the development and prosperity of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

(1) Political stability

The Han Dynasty established a strong centralized system and relatively stable politics, which provided a foundation for the development of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty. Since Liu Bang established the Han Dynasty, the central government has consolidated its control over the country through a series of policies. After Liu Bang unified China, he abolished the harsh laws of the Qin Dynasty and implemented a relaxed policy to restore production, but he still retained and improved the centralized system. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, centralization was further strengthened, and large-scale political and administrative reforms were carried out to increase control over local areas.

Early Han Dynasty, the county system was implemented, which was inherited from the Qin Dynasty. The country was divided into counties, and the county governors and county magistrates were directly responsible to the central government to effectively control the local areas and prevent local forces from becoming too powerful.

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, centralization reached its peak, and the government held the highest military, political and judicial powers. Emperor Wu of Han quelled the rebellions of Nanyue and Dongyue, and personally led an expedition to the north to defeat the Xiongnu, eliminate the threat from the northwest, and promote the prosperity of the Silk Road. The image of the Hu people in the Han Dynasty portraits reflects the cultural and economic exchanges at that time. Liu Bang eliminated the princes of different surnames and strengthened centralization, laying the foundation for social stability and the development of culture and art.

Especially during the reign of Emperor Wen and Emperor Jing, the clear politics and prosperous economy promoted the rise of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

However, the society was in crisis at the end of the Western Han Dynasty. Although the rulers of successive dynasties respected Confucianism, they governed the country with the legalist system. After Emperor Yuan ascended the throne, he relied more on Confucian disciples, which led to indecisive policies and the gradual weakening of imperial power. Emperor Cheng focused on his appearance, but was unable to govern the country, which led to social unrest and people's misery. Wang Mang took the opportunity to rise, usurped the throne, and established the "Xin Mang" [14]regime.

During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Emperor Guangwu revived the country. After the clear and bright rule of Emperor Guangwu, Emperor Ming and Emperor Zhang, the Eastern Han Dynasty was prosperous, and the politics was basically stable. The princes only retained economic power, but not political power. In the later period of Emperor Ming, the supply income of the princes was reduced to increase the fiscal revenue of the court. The emperors of the early Eastern Han Dynasty adopted a tolerant policy towards the princes. As long as they did not threaten the imperial power, the emperors would tolerate some of the princes' behavior. But if it exceeded the limit, the emperor

[14] "Xinmang" , also known as the Xin Dynasty (January 15, 9 AD - October 6, 23 AD), was a dynasty established by Wang Mang, a relative of the Western Han Dynasty, after the Western Han Dynasty .

would not hesitate to carry out large-scale suppression. Emperor Guangwu Liu Xiu restored and improved the sacrificial ritual system. These systems, together with superstition, formed the characteristics of the prevalence of lavish burials in the Eastern Han Dynasty.

In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, the struggle for power between relatives and eunuchs led to chaos in the government. Relatives and eunuchs held real power, and the emperor was manipulated by them and could not govern the country effectively. This led to political persecutions, the most famous of which was the Party and Faction Persecution, which led to the loss of social elites and the deterioration of social order.

In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, natural disasters and man-made disasters occurred frequently. In 184 AD, Zhang Jue launched the Yellow Turban Rebellion. Although the rebellion was suppressed, local forces rose and formed a separatist situation. Local warlords ruled their own territories, wars continued, and the central government existed in name only. Political turmoil increased people's dependence on religion. More Taoist and Buddhist themes appeared in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, reflecting the spiritual comfort that religion brought to people during turbulent times.

The political corruption during this period also made people's pursuit of ethics more prominent. The stories of filial piety and the image of loyal ministers commonly seen in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty reflected the importance of Confucian ethics in social turmoil. With the weakening of the central government, local culture was more expressed in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty in various places began to show local characteristics, reflecting the cultural customs and artistic styles of different regions. The downward trend of the social economy led to the decline of the stone relief production technology in the Han Dynasty, but it also gave birth to new artistic styles and techniques. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in Shandong Province showed significant local characteristics in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, depicting daily life, agricultural production and religious beliefs, reflecting the social conditions and cultural features of the time.

As the Western Han Dynasty became stronger, the national system and cultural construction gradually improved. Dong Zhongshu's idea of the correspondence between heaven and man established the researcherity of theology, making the country run in an orderly manner from politics to culture. The official selection system was also very perfect, and many outstanding talents were selected through elections, recommendations and examinations. At that time, under the influence of Confucian culture, the people followed the rules and attached importance to benevolence, righteousness, courtesy and faith. This was a strong and peaceful era. These factors all influenced the emergence and development of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty.

(2) Policy support

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han (141 BC - 87 BC), a series of policies were implemented to emphasize agriculture, suppress commerce, and promote Confucianism, encouraging the development of culture and art. These policies promoted the prosperity of art forms such as Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Policy of emphasizing agriculture and suppressing commerce: Emperor Wu of Han attached great importance to the development of agriculture and implemented a policy of emphasizing agriculture and suppressing commerce, encouraging farmers to produce and improve agricultural productivity. This policy led to the rapid development of the agricultural economy, and the gradual enrichment of farmers' lives, providing an economic foundation for the development of culture and art. With the prosperity of the agricultural economy and the increase in social wealth accumulation, people had more leisure time and resources to invest in the creation of culture and art, and the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty therefore developed.

The policy of respecting Confucianism alone: During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the policy of "rejecting all schools of thought and respecting Confucianism alone" was implemented, making Confucianism the guiding ideology of the country. Confucianism emphasizes the education of rituals and music, and has played a positive role in promoting the development of culture and art. Emperor Wu of Han promoted

Confucianism throughout the country, established the Imperial Academy, and cultivated Confucian talents. These policies and measures have enabled Confucian culture to be widely spread throughout the country. As a form of cultural art, the content and subject matter of Han Dynasty stone reliefs were also influenced by Confucianism, showing a strong ethical and ritual cultural color.

The system of selecting filial and honest officials: The system of selecting filial and honest officials was not only promoted by the central government, but also widely implemented in local areas. In the process of implementing this system, local officials often expressed filial piety by giving lavish burials, which also promoted the development of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty. This official policy guidance enabled stone relief art to spread and develop in a wider area.

Direct support for culture and art: During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the government's direct support for culture and art also promoted the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art. Emperor Wu of Han attached great importance to ritual and music culture, encouraged scholars to engage in cultural creation, and commended and rewarded outstanding cultural and artistic works. This policy environment inspired the creative enthusiasm of scholars and craftsmen and enabled the Han Dynasty stone relief art to flourish in the Han Dynasty.

(3) Development of local power

The existence of local tyrants in the Han Dynasty made local culture diverse and rich. Local tyrants often had strong economic strength and social influence. They built luxurious tombs in the local area and decorated them with Han Dynasty stone reliefs. These local tyrants displayed their social status and wealth through tomb decorations, and also promoted the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

The economic strength of local tyrants supported the large-scale decoration of tombs and the production of stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty. Most of the local tyrants in the Han Dynasty were local aristocratic families. They owned a lot of land and wealth in the local area. These economic strengths enabled them to build luxurious tombs.

Luxurious tombs require exquisite decorations, so stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty became an important material for tomb decoration.

The local tyrants were not only wealthy in economy, but also had high cultural pursuits. They hoped to show their cultural accomplishment and social status through tomb decoration. As a decorative material with high artistic value and cultural connotation, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty met the needs of the local tyrants. The cultural needs of the local tyrants promoted the development of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, making it an important part of the tomb decoration of the Han Dynasty.

Local governments were relatively relaxed in their cultural policies, allowing and encouraging the prosperity of local culture and art, which provided space for the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art. Under the guidance of central policies, local officials took measures to promote the development of local culture according to local conditions, making Han Dynasty stone reliefs present diverse styles and themes in different regions.

The local government of the Han Dynasty was relatively relaxed in cultural policies and encouraged the development of local culture and art. Under the guidance of the central government, local officials implemented a series of policies and measures to promote cultural development according to local conditions. These policies and measures included building cultural facilities, supporting cultural activities, and rewarding cultural creation. These policies and measures created a good environment for the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Due to the different economic, social and cultural environments in different regions, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty present diverse styles and themes in different regions. For example, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in Shandong Province mostly express Confucian culture and ethics, while the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in Sichuan Province mostly express local folk customs and religious beliefs. This cultural diversity not only enriched the expression content of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, but also promoted the continuous innovation and development of the

stone relief techniques of the Han Dynasty.

Summary

The development and prosperity of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty is the result of the combined effect of various political factors. The consolidation of the centralized system and political stability provided a solid foundation for the development of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty. A series of policies implemented during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, especially the policy of emphasizing agriculture and suppressing commerce, respecting Confucianism alone, and the system of selecting filial and honest officials directly promoted the development of culture and art. The economic strength and cultural needs of local tyrants established a strong centralized system in the Han Dynasty, which was relatively stable politically. This stable political environment provided a solid foundation for the development of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty. Since the founding of the Han Dynasty by Emperor Gaozu of Han, Liu Bang, the central government has consolidated its control over the country through a series of policies and measures.

Table 5 Analysis of the influence of political factors on stone relief art in the Han Dynasty

Period	Political Developments	Impact on Stone Relief Art
Western Han	Centralization: Established by Liu Bang, continued Qin's centralized system with adjustments.	Stable political environment supported cultural and artistic growth.
	Reforms: Han Wudi further centralized power, implemented political and administrative reforms.	- Strengthened state control over regions, reducing local power, leading to flourishing art forms such as stone reliefs.
	Military Campaigns: Han Wudi's military campaigns secured borders and promoted internal peace.	Economic prosperity allowed increased patronage of the arts,

		with cultural exchanges on the Silk Road influencing art styles.
	Confucian Ideals: Adoption of Confucianism as the state ideology under Han Wudi.	Confucian values influenced artistic themes, emphasizing ethics, filial piety, and loyalty.
Eastern Han	Reconstruction: Emperor Guangwu stabilized the realm after Wang Mang's usurpation, focused on restoring order.	Continued political stability underpinned a revival in cultural and artistic expressions.
	Decentralization: Power struggle between imperial relatives (wàiqī , foreign relatives) and eunuchs led to weakened central control.	Despite political issues, regional variations in stone relief art emerged, reflecting diverse local influences and themes.
	Decline: Increasing internal strife, corruption, and natural disasters led to crises and peasant uprisings, eg, the Yellow Turban Rebellion.	Artistic themes in stone reliefs began to reflect social unrest and a turn towards religious themes, depicting Buddhist and Daoist motifs.
	Cultural Shifts: Influence of external religions like Buddhism and Daoism became more pronounced in response to societal changes.	Artworks started to include religious figures and scenes, illustrating spiritual and cultural exchanges during times of political fragmentation

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

4.1.2 Economic factors

The prosperity of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty was not only the result of political influence, but also supported by economic factors. The development of

agriculture and the prosperity of commercial trade provided a solid economic foundation for stone relief art in the Han Dynasty.

(1) Advances in agricultural technology during the Han Dynasty

The advancement of agricultural technology in the Han Dynasty was a fundamental factor in economic prosperity. Since the beginning of the Han Dynasty, the government has promoted the development of agricultural production through policies such as reducing taxes and encouraging land reclamation. In particular, the widespread use of iron farm tools has improved agricultural efficiency. Farmers can cultivate and harvest more efficiently, which directly improves agricultural productivity.

The Han Dynasty government also focused on the construction of water conservancy projects, such as the construction of irrigation systems, dams and ditches. These water conservancy projects greatly improved the efficiency of agricultural irrigation and ensured the stability of agricultural production. For example, the famous Baiqu and Zhengguoqu in the Han Dynasty, these large-scale water conservancy projects not only increased the area of arable land, but also increased agricultural output.

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the government implemented a policy of emphasizing agriculture, especially through the large-scale military farming policy, to further stabilize and expand agricultural production. The implementation of the policy of emphasizing agriculture enabled the agricultural economy to develop rapidly, farmers' income increased, and their living standards improved. This economic prosperity accumulated a lot of wealth for society.

"Records of the Grand Historian: Book of the Price Control" [15]records: "During the Han Dynasty, for more than 70 years, the country was stable, there were no disasters, the people were self-sufficient, the granaries were overflowing, and the storehouses had plenty of surplus money. However, grain even rotted and deteriorated due to excessive

[15] The Pingzhengshu is a classical Chinese work written by Sima Qian , a historian of the Western Han Dynasty, and included in the Records of the Grand Historian . The book describes the origin of the policy of equalizing the exchange rate and equalizing the transportation of grains during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Western Han Dynasty . The Pingzhengshu in the Records of the Grand Historian had an important influence on the Book of Han, Food and Goods, written by Ban Gu , a historian of the Eastern Han Dynasty .

accumulation." Compared with the poverty situation in the early Western Han Dynasty, the social economy had undergone tremendous changes, which shows that Liu Bang's economic policy adjustments and the "Wenjing Administration " promoted the recovery and development of the economy in the early Western Han Dynasty.

By the middle and late Western Han Dynasty, the country's strength had greatly increased. Agriculture was regarded as "the great cause of the world", and the popularization of ox-plowing, the promotion of iron farm tools, the construction of water conservancy projects, and the improvement of farming techniques promoted agricultural development. In terms of handicrafts and commerce, the government expanded state-owned industry and commerce, restricted private ownership, and cracked down on wealthy merchants. State-owned industry and commerce gradually dominated the economic structure. The government set up official positions to manage salt and iron making, increased income through monopoly, and restricted private industry and commerce. The goods produced by state-owned handicrafts were directly distributed by the government, which reduced market circulation and restricted the exchange of private goods (Zhen Jinzhong, 2021, p.127-128).

The middle and late Western Han Dynasty was a golden period when the country was strong and the people lived and worked in peace and contentment. Although wars consumed wealth, they also allowed the people to live a rich and stable life, providing a material basis for the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art. By the late Western Han Dynasty, the social economy had further developed, and iron smelting, water conservancy, and agricultural technologies had reached a relatively high level.

In the early Eastern Han Dynasty, after experiencing the turmoil caused by Wang Mang's reform, Emperor Guangwu Liu Xiu restored the agricultural economy by reducing taxes, levies, encouraging land reclamation and farmland water conservancy construction, and gradually developed and expanded the economy (Ji Zhouli, 2023, p.98-101).

The prosperity of agriculture and the improvement of productivity brought about

the accumulation of social wealth. The increase in wealth of farmers and landlords enabled them to invest in the creation and consumption of culture and art. This provided a solid economic foundation for the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art, especially in the field of tomb decoration, and a large number of Han Dynasty stone relief works came into being.

(2) Development of handicrafts

During the Eastern Han Dynasty, the handicraft industry developed significantly with the support of the government, especially in the iron smelting, textile, ceramics, shipbuilding and other industries, where production technology and scale were improved. The iron smelting industry developed rapidly in Hebei, Shanxi and other places, forming an important iron production base. Luoyang, Chengdu, Nanyang and other places became handicraft centers, attracting a large number of craftsmen and promoting the prosperity of handicrafts. Take Luoyang as an example. As the capital of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the handicraft industry was particularly developed, especially the silk weaving industry, bronze manufacturing industry and ceramics industry. The handicraft industry in the Eastern Han Dynasty was based on workshops. The government established management agencies and craftsmen concentrated in workshops for production, which not only improved efficiency but also promoted the inheritance and innovation of technology. Figure 32 is divided into three layers: the upper part is engraved with immortals driving cars, including fish carts, dragon carts and deer carts; the middle part is engraved with buildings and pavilions, the host and guests are drinking in the pavilion, the downstairs is in the middle with textile workers, and workers are spinning on both sides, and phoenixes and strange beasts are engraved outside the building; the lower part is engraved with welcoming guests and building drums.

Figure 32 Han Dynasty stone reliefs showing banquets and weaving scenes.
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Suide Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (March 2024)

(3) Commercial development

Commercial activities were also very active in the Eastern Han Dynasty, and market trade was prosperous. The government set up fairs in major cities to encourage commodity exchange and trade, especially in Chang'an and Luoyang, where commercial activities were frequent. The Silk Road became an important international trade channel, and the government promoted exchanges with countries in the Western Regions, promoting the export and import of goods. The monetary economy was developed, and the Wuzhu coin was the main currency in circulation. The financial industry also developed, and activities such as lending and pawning appeared.

The taxation system of the Eastern Han Dynasty continued the practice of the Western Han Dynasty, including land rent, household tax and corvée. Land rent was

collected in kind, and household tax was collected per capita. The government ensured the stability of fiscal revenue through reasonable tax policies. The government also continued the equal distribution and price stabilization policies of the Western Han Dynasty, regulated market prices and ensured economic stability. The fiscal revenue of the Eastern Han Dynasty mainly came from agricultural, handicraft and commercial taxes, as well as foreign trade income. Expenditure included administrative management, military defense, water conservancy construction and disaster relief.

During the Eastern Han Dynasty, the power of powerful landlords expanded, forming a manor economy. Large landowners occupied land through purchase or merger, which became a new form of land ownership. With the support of powerful forces, the Eastern Han regime compromised with these big families, and the manor economy occupied an important position in the national economy.

Figure 33 Depicting the banquet for guests at the manor (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

At that time, a manor was a microcosm of society (Figure 33). This economic model cultivated specialized managers, including educated people, painters, and construction craftsmen, which provided funds, craftsmen, and managers for the development of Han Dynasty mural art. Generally, manor owners prepared tombs for themselves very early, because stone tombs at that time could not be built overnight,

and it took many years to complete. Some tombs were not completed until the death of the manor owner because they started late. For example, in the Baiji Han Tomb near Xuzhou City, there are several stones with unfinished decorative patterns. The completion of a tomb requires a lot of funds and craftsmen, so at that time only manor owners could meet such conditions. The development of the manor economy made a great contribution to the development of Han Dynasty mural art at that time.

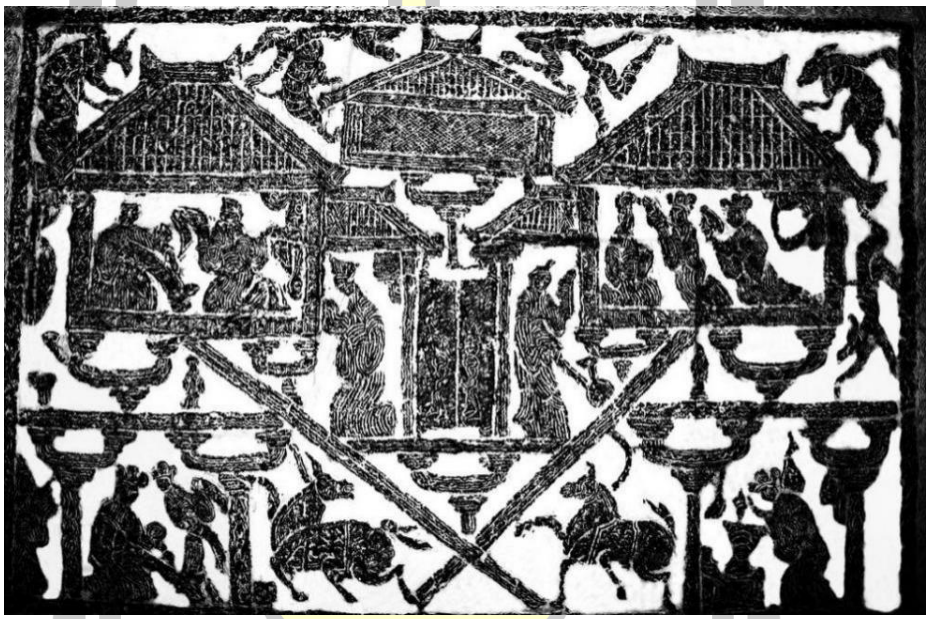

Figure 34 This picture shows a scene of Han Dynasty people playing music and dancing (rubbing)

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

This Han Dynasty painting "Manor Music and Dance" (Figure 34) is a Han Dynasty relief stone with powerful carvings and simple and unsophisticated painting style. It shows the life scenes of a manor in the Han Dynasty. The architecture in the picture is very distinctive: the building is divided into two floors. There are two horses in the middle of the first floor. On the right is the kitchen. A chef is putting fish into the pot with lamb and pork legs hanging on his head. On the left is a scene of playing the piano. A woman is playing the piano, another woman is dancing with long sleeves, and a servant is standing next to her. In the middle of the picture is a double-leaf door, and the decoration of the door knocker is vaguely visible. There are two servants on both

sides, one is standing with a bent waist, and the other is kneeling to report. On the right side of the second floor, two servants are kneeling to offer gifts, each holding a bird in their hands. On the left, there is a person playing the piano and another woman is dancing. There are four dragons and a feathered man (a person with wings) on the roof.

By the late Eastern Han Dynasty, with the development of the manor economy, agricultural tools became more sophisticated and diversified. The number of all-iron agricultural tools increased, and these tools were shown in Han Dynasty stone relief art, and more advanced agricultural tools were unearthed in various places (Ji Zhouli, 2023, p.81-103).

also made remarkable progress in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, especially the textile industry. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Jiaxiang, Shandong and Xuzhou, Jiangsu vividly depict the scenes of textile production.

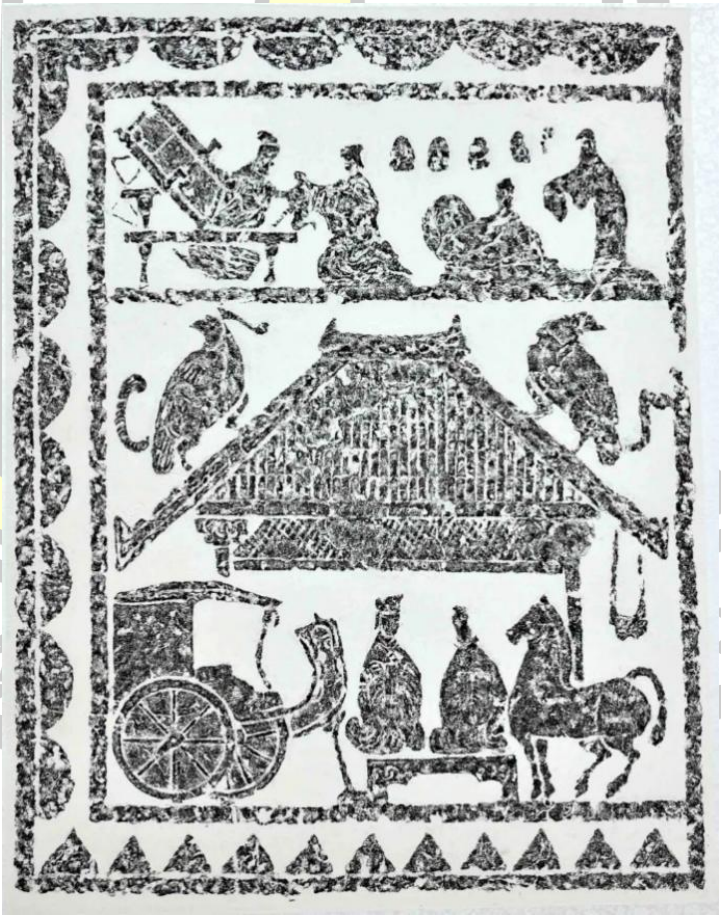

Figure 35 Scenes showing textiles and leisure life (rubbings)

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

In Figure 35 depicts a peasant woman sitting on a loom and turning around to hold the baby that was brought to her. The image of her intense labor is vivid, depicting the scene of men farming and women weaving in an ordinary family.

The continuous development of the manor economy in the late Eastern Han Dynasty made it possible for the custom of lavish burials at that time, and also provided creative themes for the art of Han Dynasty portraits. It was during this period that Han Dynasty portraits, especially Han Dynasty stone portraits, reached an unprecedented prosperity. Judging from the Han Dynasty stone portraits discovered so far, the Han Dynasty stone portraits in the late Eastern Han Dynasty are unprecedented in both quantity and quality.

In summary, the emergence and development of Han Dynasty stone relief art is closely related to the economic conditions at that time. The prosperity of the Han Dynasty economy provided a material basis for the creation of Han Dynasty stone relief art. At the same time, the popularity and development of Han Dynasty stone relief art also reflected the various characteristics and changes of the Han Dynasty economy. With the development of agriculture, handicrafts and commerce, the social wealth of the Han Dynasty accumulated significantly, forming a wealthy class. These wealthy classes not only enjoyed a high social status, but also pursued a luxurious lifestyle and burial customs. In addition, the development of handicrafts and commerce, such as the expansion of state-owned industry and commerce and the suppression of private industry and commerce, also provided important support for the development of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Table 6 It is a structural summary of economic factors and their influence on the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty

category	Economic Policy	Economic Form	The promotion effect on stone relief
agriculture	Tax cuts, incentives for land reclamation and the construction of water conservancy projects have improved agricultural productivity.	Increased agricultural production led to wealth accumulation and a stable food supply.	The wealthy landowning class invested their wealth in lavish tomb art, reflecting agricultural prosperity.
handicraft	The government supported tool development and large-scale engineering projects, which promoted the development of handicrafts.	The prosperity of centers of craft production promoted opportunities for tools and techniques.	Advanced tools and techniques have made the design of the stone reliefs more refined and detailed.
Business	Trade routes and government-controlled commerce expanded trade opportunities.	Market activities and trade routes promoted the circulation of diversified goods, especially luxury goods.	The spread of luxury goods and artistic skills led to more complex and exquisite tomb art designs.

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

4.1.3 Cultural factors

(1) The custom of lavish burials

The Han Dynasty was full of lavish burials. Nobles and wealthy merchants built luxurious tombs for themselves during their lifetime, and tomb decoration became an important way to show status and wealth. The lavish burials not only reflected the religious beliefs and death concepts of the Han people, but also showed their emphasis on life in the afterlife. In order to enjoy wealth and honor even after death, nobles and wealthy merchants began to prepare their own tombs during their lifetime.

The scale and luxury of Han Dynasty tombs are often proportional to the social status and economic strength of the tomb owner. Luxurious tombs require a lot of decoration (Figure 36), and Han Dynasty stone reliefs have become an indispensable part of them. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only decorations, but also symbols of the identity and status of the tomb owner.

Figure 36 A Han Dynasty relief stone depicting a motorcade of people in pavilions.
Source: Photographed by researcher at Shandong Museum (April 2024)

(2) The influence of Confucianism

The dominant position of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty had an important impact on the content and form of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Confucianism emphasizes

ethics, family responsibilities and ancestor worship, and these concepts are fully reflected in the subject selection and artistic expression of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. For example, many Han Dynasty stone reliefs are carved with scenes of family banquets and descendants worshipping their ancestors, which show the filial piety and family concepts advocated by Confucianism. Through these art forms, the Han people tried to express their respect for ethics and morality and the worship and commemoration of their ancestors. This concept occupied a dominant position in the society at that time and was widely spread through the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Most of the Han Dynasty cemeteries were chosen in places with mountains behind, high terrain and facing the sun. Cemeteries with good feng shui were believed to bring good luck. Confucianism emphasizes filial piety and attaches importance to "treating the dead as if they were alive" (an important funeral concept in Han Dynasty society, which means "treating the dead as if they were alive". This concept originated from Confucianism, especially the teachings of Confucius, emphasizing filial piety and respect for ancestors). In the Han Dynasty, "treating the dead as if they were alive" was mainly reflected in funeral customs and tomb culture. People believed that the dead still lived a life similar to their life in the other world, so the living should try their best to meet the needs of the dead, just like they would treat the living. This concept prompted the Han people to pay special attention to the construction of tombs and the configuration of burial objects. They would prepare a large number of daily necessities, food, decorations, and even models and stone reliefs for the deceased to ensure that the deceased could continue to enjoy a comfortable life in the other world.

This concept led to the prevalence of lavish burials. Many nobles and wealthy families would build luxurious tombs for themselves or their relatives, decorated with exquisite stone reliefs and carved with scenes of daily life or symbolic symbols, in order to ensure that the souls of the deceased could find peace and satisfaction in the other world. This funeral concept of "treating the dead as if they were alive" not only reflects the respect for ancestors at that time, but also expresses people's belief and hope in the

afterlife. Therefore, grand funerals were often held after the death of relatives.

(4) Burial culture played an important role in ancient society, reflecting people's belief in the existence of the soul and the thoughts and customs of various ethnic groups. "Burial" refers to burying the dead, and "tomb" refers to the burial site. There is a difference between a grave and a tomb: a grave is a mound built after burial , while a tomb is filled up after burial without a mound. Burial culture also includes burial objects and related ritual activities.

The funeral customs of the Han Dynasty were particularly elaborate, and the wealthy displayed their status through luxurious tombs. Han Dynasty stone reliefs, as tomb decorations, not only beautified the tomb chamber, but also recorded the life and family history of the tomb owner, reflecting the etiquette and beliefs of the time. The specifications and burial objects of the tomb were closely related to the identity of the tomb owner, including pottery, bronze, jade and Han Dynasty stone reliefs, which were intended to provide protection for the deceased in the afterlife.

(3) Influence of Taoist Beliefs

With the rise of Taoism in the Han Dynasty, religious beliefs also had a profound impact on the content and form of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Taoist beliefs emphasize the worship of gods and immortality, and these concepts are specifically expressed in the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Many Han Dynasty stone reliefs are engraved with contents related to Taoist beliefs such as gods, winged people, and ascension pictures, reflecting people's belief in supernatural powers and pursuit of immortality. People hope to ensure that the deceased will continue to enjoy glory in the afterlife through exquisite funerals, and even become immortals. In addition, Taoist symbols and religious scenes in tombs also express people's desire to protect the souls of the deceased through religious rituals and beliefs. This religious belief gradually became one of the important themes of Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Wang Degang, 1991, p.264-271).

Figure 37 This stone relief shows a towering building surrounded by different animals, reflecting the tomb owner's worship of the afterlife.

Source: Photographed by researchers (April 2024)

Burial culture is of great significance in ancient society, reflecting people's belief in the existence of the soul and the thoughts and customs of various ethnic groups. "Burial" refers to burying the dead, and "tomb" refers to the burial site. A tomb is a mound built after burial, while a tomb is filled without a mound. Burial culture also includes burial objects and related ritual activities (Wang Degang, 1991, p.264-271).

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In short, in order to consolidate their researcherity, the rulers of the Han Dynasty often demonstrated their prestige through luxurious tombs. For example, the Maoling Mausoleum of Emperor Wu of Han was grand in scale and became a model for later generations to emulate. With the development of social economy, nobles and wealthy businessmen also invested a lot of resources in luxurious tombs to show their wealth

and status. Folk beliefs believe that the dead still need to enjoy their lives in the other world, so people prepare a large number of burial objects for the deceased to ensure their comfort in the other world. This belief promoted the popularization of lavish burials.

The lavish burial custom of the Han Dynasty was not only a social phenomenon, but also had a profound impact on artistic creation, especially the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. As an important part of tomb decoration, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty reflect the prevalence of the lavish burial custom in the Han Dynasty and the social concepts behind it.

Table 7 The following table summarizes the main cultural factors that influenced Han Dynasty stone relief art, outlining their direct effects and influences.

Cultural factors	Direct Action	Influence
The tradition of lavish funeral	Spurred the rise of luxurious tomb decorations reflecting social status and wealth	Increased demand for elaborate tomb art, demonstrating social status through detailed carvings
Confucianism	It promoted the custom of lavish burials and influenced artistic content with themes such as filial piety, family ethics and ancestor worship.	Emphasizes ethical and ritual scenes, enhancing the cultural depth of the artwork
Taoist Beliefs	Introduced themes of immortality, gods, and supernatural beliefs into art	It popularized the depiction of immortality and spiritual symbols, enriching artistic expression

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

2.4.2 The social environment in which the stone relief art declining in the Han Dynasty

2.4.2.1 Political factors

Political turmoil, regime change, and policy shifts had a profound impact on the late Han Dynasty, especially the late Eastern Han Dynasty. Frequent social unrest such as the Yellow Turban Rebellion, Dong Zhuo's Rebellion, and subsequent warlord struggles led to frequent regime changes and extremely unstable society. This turmoil not only disrupted people's lives and economic activities, but also hindered many large-scale art projects. The relief stone, which requires a stable environment and a large number of resources, gradually lost the conditions for survival in this turmoil. With the demise of the Han Dynasty and the beginning of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the new regime pursued different cultural policies and artistic preferences. The rulers of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties prioritized practicality and military defense rather than the construction of large-scale art projects. In addition, the new regime also had a new orientation in religion and culture, and the emphasis on the unique relief stone art form of the Han Dynasty gradually weakened.

2.4.2.2 Economic factors

Economic recession and high production costs are important factors. At the end of the Han Dynasty, the economic situation deteriorated seriously due to long-term wars and social unrest. Agricultural production was interrupted, the heavy tax burden increased, and people's lives were difficult. In this economic context, resources were scarce, and large-scale production of stone reliefs was not realistic. Moreover, the production of stone reliefs required high-quality stone, superb carving technology, and a large number of laborers, all of which required a large amount of financial investment. In times of economic prosperity, wealthy families and countries could afford these expenses, but in times of economic recession, the high production costs of stone reliefs became an obstacle to their continued development.

2.4.2.3 Cultural factors

Changes in cultural trends and religious influences play an important role. After the Han Dynasty, cultural tastes shifted from rough, realistic artistic styles to quiet, elegant aesthetic styles. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, literati's elegant theories and metaphysical thoughts prevailed, and they attached importance to the spiritual and conceptual expression of art, making realistic-style stone reliefs no longer popular. At the same time, with the spread and influence of Buddhism in China, Buddhist art gradually emerged and occupied an important position. Buddhist sculptures, murals and other forms gradually replaced traditional stone reliefs and became the new mainstream of art. The prosperity of Buddhist art also contributed to the decline of stone reliefs to a certain extent.

In addition, after the Han Dynasty, people's ideas about reincarnation also changed. In the past, people believed that the dead needed to live in the underworld for a period of time to obtain a better afterlife, so there were stone reliefs and brick carvings made for the dead in the underworld. However, at the end of the Han Dynasty, influenced by the sinicization of Buddhism, people believed that their ancestors could directly ascend to the paradise after death. Therefore, the post-Han society lost interest and necessity in making exquisite stone reliefs and brick carvings underground, and instead focused on creating brilliant Buddhist art on the ground. It is worth noting that the Dunhuang Grottoes art is an outstanding representative of Buddhist art during this period.

2.4.2.4 Funeral customs. Changes in funeral customs also played a vital role. The social structure underwent major changes at the end of the Han Dynasty, and traditional nobles and large families gradually declined or disappeared. These classes were the main demanders and sponsors of stone reliefs, and their decline directly led to a decrease in the demand for stone reliefs. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, with the changes in funeral customs, the form of tombs gradually simplified. Brick chamber tombs and mural tombs gradually replaced stone relief tombs. These changes in funeral customs not only reflect changes in social and economic conditions,

but also mark a shift in cultural concepts.

2.4.2.5 Technical factors

Interruption of technology inheritance and rise of new technologies. Social unrest and regime change made it difficult to effectively inherit and develop the technology of stone relief production. Many skilled craftsmen were displaced or lost, resulting in the decline of stone relief production technology. With the progress of society, new art techniques and forms such as murals and sculptures emerged, which have unique expressiveness and low production costs, gradually replacing stone relief as the new mainstream of art. Stone relief requires high-quality stone, and the supply of stone varies from place to place. Social unrest and inconvenient transportation made it increasingly difficult to obtain high-quality stone, thus limiting the production of stone relief. During the late Han Dynasty, Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, exchanges and communication between regions were limited, which further hindered the spread of culture and technology, thereby hindering the spread and development of stone relief art.

the decline of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is the result of a complex interaction of multiple factors. Political turmoil and regime change caused an unstable social environment, economic downturn and high production costs made stone relief art unsustainable, changes in funeral customs reduced the demand for stone reliefs, cultural changes and religious influences changed artistic preferences, technological disruptions and the rise of new art forms gradually replaced stone reliefs, and geographical restrictions limited its development. These combined factors led to the gradual decline and disappearance of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Table 8 Summarizes the factors that led to the decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Factor Category	Specific manifestations	Influence on stone relief art
Political factors	Political turmoil and regime change: Yellow Turban Rebellion, Dong Zhuo's Rebellion and subsequent warlord struggles Policy shifts: New regimes pursue different cultural policies	Social unrest hindered large-scale art projects The new regime paid less attention to stone relief art
Economic factors	Economic recession: Long-term wars have disrupted agricultural production and made people's lives difficult High production costs of stone reliefs: Huge demand for high-quality stone, carving technology and labor	The economic downturn has led to a shortage of resources, making it impossible to support the continued production of stone reliefs The high cost of making stone reliefs has become an obstacle to its development
Cultural factors	Changes in cultural thought: from rough realism to quiet elegance Rise of Buddhist art: Buddhist sculptures and murals replaced stone reliefs	Stone reliefs gradually lost favor Buddhist art became the new mainstream, replacing stone reliefs
Funeral customs	Decline of the nobility and wealthy families: the main demand for stone reliefs	The demand for stone reliefs decreased and the art form was gradually replaced

	decreased Changes in funeral customs: brick chamber tombs and mural tombs gradually replaced stone relief tombs	
Technical factors	Interruption of technology inheritance: social unrest and regime change lead to technology loss- Rise of new technologies: new art forms such as murals and sculptures emerge	The craftsmanship of stone relief gradually declined New art forms replaced stone relief and became the new mainstream

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

Analysis and summary

The rise and fall of the stone relief art in the Han Dynasty was mainly influenced by multiple factors such as politics, economy, culture and technology. Political stability and centralization provided the basis for the development of stone relief, and the cultural policy of Emperor Wu of Han and the support of local tyrants promoted the prosperity of art. Economically, the prosperity of agriculture, handicrafts and commerce accumulated social wealth, making luxurious tombs and stone relief decorations popular. Culturally, the custom of lavish burials, Confucianism, and Taoist beliefs shaped the content of art. However, factors such as political turmoil, economic recession, changes in cultural trends and technological discontinuity in the late Eastern Han Dynasty led to the gradual decline of stone relief art in the Han Dynasty, which was eventually replaced by other art forms.

2.5 Discovery, protection and current status analysis of Han Dynasty stone relief art

2.5.1 Discovery and Protection Process of Han Dynasty stone relief art

(1) Early discoveries (from the Qing Dynasty to 1949 AD)

The early discovery of Han Dynasty stone reliefs mainly relied on the efforts of local scholars and cultural relic enthusiasts. For example, Qing Dynasty scholars Gu Yanwu, Duan Chengshi and others had recorded and described Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In the early 20th century, with the rise of modern archaeology, scholars began to systematically excavate Han Dynasty tombs. Between 1900 and 1949, many important Han Dynasty tombs were discovered in Shandong, Jiangsu, Henan and other places, bringing about the excavation of a large number of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The discoveries during this period were mostly based on the exploration of local archaeologists and foreign scholars. However, the protection measures during this period were relatively simple, mainly cleaning and preliminary restoration of the unearthed Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Due to technical limitations, many Han Dynasty stone reliefs have not been scientifically protected, and some cultural relics have been seriously lost.

(2) Discovery and protection after the founding of New China (1949 to present)

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state attached great importance to archaeological work and organized many large-scale archaeological excavations. For example, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs of Wu's Temple discovered in Jiaxiang, Shandong in 1956 were an important discovery during this period. Han Dynasty stone relief tombs in Xuzhou, Jiangsu, Nanyang, Henan and other places were discovered one after another, providing rich materials for the study of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. After the 1980s, with the development of archaeological technology, more Han Dynasty stone reliefs were discovered and studied. The Western Han Dynasty stone relief tomb discovered in Zoucheng, Shandong in 1981 revealed the new artistic style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Entering the 21st century, the application of modern

archaeological technology has made the discovery of Han Dynasty stone reliefs more systematic and scientific.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state established cultural relics protection institutions and formulated cultural relics protection laws and regulations to systematically protect the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In 1958, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage was established, marking the institutionalization and professionalization of China's cultural relics protection. During this period, a variety of methods such as chemical protection and physical protection were adopted, such as anti-corrosion treatment, reinforcement and repair of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, in order to extend their preservation period.

2.5.2 Analysis of the current status of Han Dynasty stone relief art

At present, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are generally protected in museums. For example, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in Nanyang are mainly preserved in the Nanyang Han Painting Museum. The Han Painting Museum was built in 1935 and rebuilt twice in 1958 and 1976. In the 1980s, with the discovery of a large number of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the original collection of the museum reached saturation.

In 1986, the Planning and Economic Commission of Henan Province approved the project to expand the Han Painting Museum, which was completed and officially opened at the end of 1999. At present, the Nanyang Han Painting Museum has more than 2,500 pieces of collections, including more than 150 first-class items, and has become a national center for the collection, display, protection and research of Han paintings.

As a public welfare cultural institution, the museum not only plays the role of "exhibitor", but more importantly, it embodies the educational significance for the people. Therefore, the establishment of the Nanyang Han Painting Museum has played an indelible historical role in the protection of Nanyang stone reliefs to a large extent. Mr. Jian Bozan, a famous historian, said: "Except for the relics of the ancients, no other

historical material can better reflect the specific image of the society in history than paintings and sculptures. At the same time, in Chinese history, no other era can better carve the forms of real life and popular stories on stone slabs than the Han Dynasty (Xin Lixiang, 2000, p.132-134). "The Nanyang Han Dynasty Painting Museum vividly presents the material and spiritual society of the Han Dynasty to the world in the form of exhibition of real objects. Cultural relics protection institutions and museums in various places have made certain progress in the restoration and preservation of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Museum was built in 1996. On March 29, 2008, the new Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Museum (Figure 38) was officially opened and opened to the public free of charge according to the requirements of the Central Propaganda Department. The Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Museum is located on the bank of the Jinghe Bridge in the city, under the Longquan Tower, and adjacent to the Longquan Cultural Square. The museum displays and collects more than 400 Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Figure 38 Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum

Source: Photo taken by researcherr in Tengzhou (April 2024)

Figure 39 The interior of the Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, photographed in May 2023

Source: Photographed by researcherr (April 2024)

Through physical cleaning, chemical reinforcement and other technical means, many Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been properly preserved. Some important Han Dynasty stone reliefs are placed in exhibition halls with constant temperature and humidity to avoid further damage from the natural environment. At the same time, the protection of underground cultural relics has gradually received attention, and some Han Dynasty stone reliefs buried underground have been properly handled through scientific archaeological methods. Museums across the country have gradually set up special exhibition areas to display Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Figure 39).

2.5.3 Problems with the current state of Han Dynasty reliefs stone art

(1) Difficulties in cultural relics protection

Despite the progress in conservation technology, Han Dynasty stone reliefs still face problems such as weathering, peeling and biological erosion after being unearthed.

Many Han Dynasty stone reliefs were already severely damaged when they were unearthed, and more advanced conservation and restoration technology is urgently needed.

The protection of cultural relics requires a lot of financial and technical support, but the current financial and technical reserves in some places are insufficient, resulting in the inability to carry out in-depth protection work on some Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

(2) Limitations of academic research

Although the research on Han Dynasty stone reliefs is becoming increasingly in-depth, there is an imbalance in the allocation of research resources. Some Han Dynasty stone reliefs that have been unearthed in small numbers and in remote locations lack sufficient research and attention. Some studies still focus on the surface image analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, lacking a multi -dimensional and in-depth interpretation of their cultural connotations. As a great work of art in ancient China, the research on its aesthetic value is far from enough, which limits the comprehensive interpretation of the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

(3) Public awareness and communication challenges

Although Han Dynasty stone relief art has been displayed in museums and exhibitions, the public's understanding of its historical significance and cultural connotations is still relatively limited. How to enhance the public's understanding of Han Dynasty stone relief art through effective communication methods is an important challenge currently faced.

Some traditional museums have a relatively simple display method and lack of interaction with the audience, resulting in poor cultural communication effects of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The popularization of digital display has not yet been fully launched, and more technical investment and innovative design are needed.

(4) Limited social and cultural influence

Cultural heritage is out of touch with modern society: Although the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are of great value as cultural heritage, their actual influence in modern

society is relatively limited. Public awareness is low. How to combine this cultural heritage with the needs of modern society and achieve a wider social influence is a question worth exploring.

Analysis and summary

This section summarizes the discovery, protection, and current status of Han Dynasty stone relief art. The early discovery of Han Dynasty stone reliefs relied on local scholars and enthusiasts. After the founding of New China, the state increased its efforts in archaeology and cultural relics protection and promoted the systematic excavation and preservation of Han Dynasty stone reliefs through modern technology. At present, Han Dynasty stone reliefs are mainly preserved in museums in various places and displayed to the public through exhibitions. However, the protection of Han Dynasty stone reliefs faces difficulties such as weathering and insufficient technology, uneven distribution of research resources, low public awareness, and limited cultural communication and social influence. In the future, it is necessary to strengthen protection, research, and dissemination to enhance its cultural value.

Summary

This section introduces the historical background of the Han Dynasty. Understanding the historical background of the Han Dynasty helps researcher understand the social function and cultural significance of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are defined as a kind of exquisite stone carving art, mainly used for the decoration of tombs, ancestral halls and other buildings, and have the characteristics of sacrificial funeral art. The content of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty shows all aspects of the society of the Han Dynasty, indicating that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are not only decorations, but also the embodiment of the social ideology and culture of the Han Dynasty. The geographical distribution of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in my country is analyzed. Through geographical space analysis, the differences in style and content in different regions are analyzed, and the reasons behind them are explored, which helps to understand how the cultural

background of different regions affects the artistic style and content of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. Through analysis, it is found that political stability and policy support provided a solid foundation for the development of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, and economic prosperity provided a material basis for the creation of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Among the cultural factors, the luxurious funeral style promoted the construction of luxurious tombs, Confucianism influenced the subject selection of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, and Taoist beliefs shaped the artistic expression of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty.

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CHAPTER III

The Cultural Value of Han Dynasty Stone Picture Art

Introduction

This chapter mainly studies and analyzes the material cultural value, spiritual cultural value and communication cultural value in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty and summarizes the value transformation of the cultural value in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty in contemporary society, emphasizing the importance of these cultural values to cultural construction in the context of the new era. Through the creative transformation and innovative development of these cultural values, we can promote the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional culture and provide strong cultural support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

3.1 Elaboration of the concept of cultural values

The book "The Important Role of Culture - How Values Affect Human Progress" edited by Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison is a book that deeply explores the role of culture in human progress. This book explores cultural values from the perspectives of culture and economic development, culture and political development, culture and gender, culture and American minorities, the Asian crisis, and promoting change.

In terms of culture and American minorities, this book explores how culture affects the economic and social status of American minorities. In terms of promoting change, this book explores the importance of cultural change and how to deal with cultural change (Samuel Huntington Lawrence Harrison, 2010.p14-19).

In his book "Theory of Cultural Values", Sun Meitang pointed out that value is not a natural relationship between things that have always existed in nature, but it is because of people. The meaning of all things to people is good or bad from the perspective of

people. Value is a world centered on people, which is transformed and created by people through social practice. Sun Meitang's cultural value theory emphasizes that cultural value is centered on people and is valuable only when it is adopted by people (Sun Meitang, 2005, p.36-38). Shan Shilian discussed the research on the external communication of Chinese cultural values in his book "Speaking to the World: The Communication of Chinese Cultural Values", mainly discussing how to effectively communicate China's cultural values to the outside world. This involves two main aspects: the external exchange of culture and art and the construction of a foreign discourse system.

This book also discusses in depth the construction and significance of the Chinese discourse system, mainly involving how to build a discourse system that not only reflects Chinese values, but also can be understood and accepted by the international community. This system needs to include the integration of national discourse and foreign discourse, and it must have both Chinese characteristics and a global perspective. This book discusses how to build a discourse system that not only reflects Chinese values, but also can be understood and accepted by the international community, and through the integration of national discourse and foreign discourse, it can retain Chinese characteristics and have a global vision (Shan Shilian, 2024, p.55-57).

Zhao Kun pointed out in his book "The Contemporary Value of China's Excellent Traditional Culture" that cultural value is a relationship, which contains two aspects of regulation: on the one hand, there is an object that can meet a cultural need. On the other hand, there is a subject with cultural needs. When a certain subject finds an object that can meet its cultural needs and possesses this object in some way, a cultural value relationship emerges.

Cultural value is a social product. Cultural value cannot be simply understood as the attribute of things that meet individual cultural needs. People are not only the demanders of cultural values, but also the bearers of cultural values. Cultural value is

always for the service of people. Things that humans do not need do not have cultural value. At the same time, cultural value is created by people. Whether it is people's cultural needs or cultural products that meet such needs, they can only be formed in people's social practice. People's ability to create cultural needs and cultural products is also cultural value in itself, and it is the most essential cultural value. Any social form has its own unique cultural needs, and this cultural need can only be met by this kind of activity.

From the perspective of value form, in contemporary China, the excellent traditional Chinese culture has material value, spiritual value and communication value. First, material value. On the one hand, the clothing, food, architecture, utensils, etc. in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can also directly meet people's material needs in terms of clothing, food, housing, transportation, and use. On the other hand, the governance ideas, values, development concepts, literature and art in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can serve the production of material resources and indirectly exert the material value of culture. Second, spiritual value. Among the basic needs of people, the need for truth, goodness and aesthetics is an important spiritual need. The profound philosophical thoughts, ethical concepts, literature and art in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can provide rich and valuable spiritual food for people today to seek truth, goodness and aesthetics. Third, the value of communication. People live in social relations. The satisfaction of people's material and spiritual needs cannot be separated from the premise of communication, so people have the need for communication. Some ethical norms, etiquette and customs, and legal systems in the excellent traditional Chinese culture can help people deal with the relationship between people and the relationship between people and society, thereby providing important reference and inspiration for establishing a harmonious, fair and reasonable social order. In this book, it is pointed out that cultural value is determined by the relationship between subject and object. The object that meets cultural needs and the subject with cultural needs together constitute cultural value. Cultural value not only meets

individual needs but is also a social product. It is created and undertaken by human beings in social practice and has three aspects of value: material, spiritual and communication. In contemporary China, the material value of China's excellent traditional culture is reflected in the practical application of food, clothing, housing, transportation and governance concepts; the spiritual value is reflected in satisfying people's needs for truth, kindness and aesthetics; and the communication value is reflected in helping to establish a harmonious social order (Zhao Kun, 2019, p. 87-88)

Analysis and summary

By analyzing the definitions of culture and cultural value, combined with the characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art, this study adopts Zhao Kun's definition and explanation of the concept of cultural value: the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art needs to be explored from three levels: material, spiritual and communication. The use of a broad cultural perspective is more helpful to understand the cultural connotation of stone relief. First, through the study of these material cultural heritages, we can better understand the productivity, technical level and historical background of artistic creation in Han Dynasty society. Secondly, the spiritual level involves the ethical concepts, religious beliefs and philosophical thoughts contained in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, which are vividly reflected in the theme selection, image design and narrative method of the stone reliefs. The common themes of filial piety, loyalty, blessing and other themes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the core values of the society at that time, showing people's belief in supernatural powers, the continuation of ancestor worship and the pursuit of ethics and morality. These spiritual connotations not only shaped the lifestyle of the Han people, but also left a profound impact on the cultural inheritance of later generations. Thirdly, the communication value is reflected in the function of stone reliefs in social communication and clan relations, such as its role in sacrifice, rituals and family relations. In the Han Dynasty, stone reliefs were not only works of art, but also important tools for maintaining social relations and conveying etiquette norms. By analyzing these communicative values, we can better

understand how Han Dynasty society used visual art to strengthen social order and consolidate clan ties.

Therefore, through the study of the three levels of material, spiritual and communication combined with the broad concept of culture, we can fully reveal the multiple values of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty and help us to more deeply understand its important position in historical and cultural heritage. Using the perspective of the subject-object relationship in cultural value, analyzing the transformation and innovation of the cultural value of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty in contemporary Chinese society, we can more systematically explore the cultural connotation of the stone relief of the Han Dynasty, thereby revealing its special significance in the development of Chinese culture and its influence on future generations. This kind of research not only helps to enrich our understanding of Han Dynasty culture, but also provides valuable historical resources and inspiration for contemporary cultural innovation.

3.2 The material cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art

The study of Han Dynasty stone relief art should first start with the value of material culture, which is consistent with the view put forward by Marx and Engels that "people must first eat, drink, live and wear clothes before they can engage in politics, science, art, religion, etc." (Marx and Engels, 2012, p. 1002). Material culture is the basis for understanding the lifestyle, technological level and economic conditions of Han Dynasty society, and is also an important prerequisite for analyzing other cultural values. This section aims to reveal the style and changes of Han Dynasty society and show the lifestyle of people in that era by carefully studying the material cultural expressions of architecture, clothing, diet, transportation and production activities in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. These material cultural heritages not only provide valuable information about the craftsmanship and technology of the Han Dynasty, but also

reflect the social structure, economic development and cultural exchanges at that time, thus laying the foundation for more comprehensive cultural research.

3.2.1 Architectural Culture

The buildings that frequently appear in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, such as palaces, pavilions, temples, ancestral halls, and tombs, provide us with a window to observe the architectural technology and style of the Han Dynasty. These carefully carved portraits not only show the structural characteristics and decorative style of Han Dynasty architecture, but also reflect the building materials and craftsmanship level at that time. In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the depiction of palaces and pavilions is particularly prominent. They usually adopt the form of double-eaved hip roofs and four-sided slope roofs, showing the grandeur and exquisiteness of Han Dynasty architecture. This architectural style was extremely popular in the Han Dynasty, not only reflecting the dignity and researcherity of the royal family, but also showing the superb architectural skills of the craftsmen at that time. In addition, the temples and ancestral halls in the stone reliefs are also quite distinctive, and their architectural style is simple and solemn, reflecting the Han people's awe of the gods and respect for their ancestors. It is also "an ideal standardized expression of the afterlife environment of people at that time, reflecting the real life and spiritual world of the Han people." (Yue Ling and Jin Aixiu, 2024, P. 32)

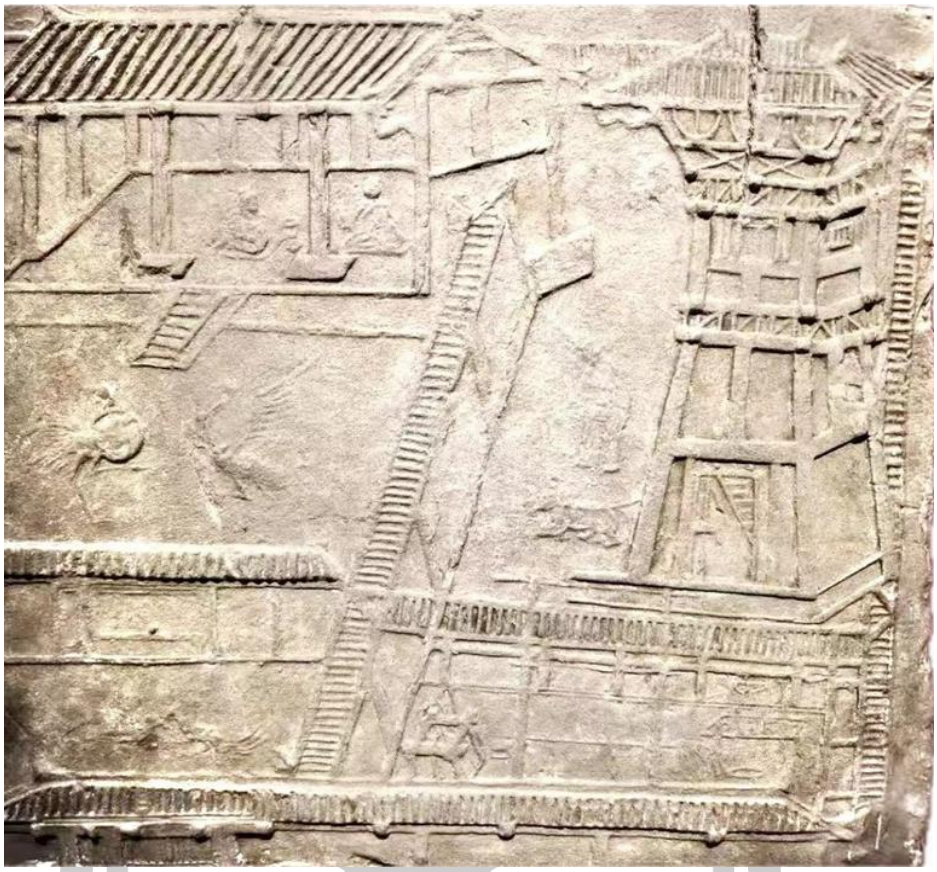

Figure 40 Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a mansion with multiple courtyards
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

The courtyards of the houses in the Han Dynasty relief bricks and stone reliefs show the society's detailed division of architectural space functions and the embodiment of clan ethics at that time. For example, the courtyard picture of the Han Dynasty relief stone unearthed in Chengdu, Sichuan (Figure 40) is a typical example. These courtyards are usually divided into two or three independent courtyards in front and back according to the nature of the activities, with separate courtyards on the side, and the overall layout is orderly. The front yard is mainly used for daily reception, social and ceremonial activities, and is an important part of the family's public space; while the back yard is mostly used as a private family space for family members to live and rest. As the main public activity space, the hall is not only used to receive guests, hold banquets and cultural and entertainment activities, but also reflects the relationship

between the elders and the young within the clan. There are living facilities such as wells and kitchens in the courtyard, and some houses are also built with watchtowers for family members to look out and rest. This courtyard layout reflects the emphasis on axis and symmetry in Han Dynasty architecture and shows the rational design and aesthetic pursuit of early Chinese architecture in space planning.

During the Han Dynasty, high-rise buildings became more diverse. In addition to the common towers and pavilions, distinctive pavilions also frequently appeared in portraits. The pavilions of the Han Dynasty were usually built in waterside environments, open on all sides, focusing on the integration of natural landscapes and emphasizing the broad field of vision. They were ideal places for people to fish, view the scenery, and relax and entertain. The design of these pavilions fully reflects the architectural wisdom and artistic creativity of the craftsmen of the Han Dynasty, especially their structures are often composed of complex brackets and beams. The stacked architectural components form a sense of leap and visual dynamic aesthetics, showing the superb architectural technology of the Han Dynasty. These architectural forms are not only an important manifestation of the material civilization of the Han Dynasty society, but also a vivid portrayal of people's spiritual life and aesthetic taste.

Among the existing stone reliefs from the Han Dynasty, the pavilion reliefs unearthed in Liangcheng Town, Weishan County, Shandong Province (Figure 41) vividly show the structure and style of pavilions and terraces, reflecting the creativity of Han Dynasty craftsmen in architectural art. These works of art show how the ancients combined natural landscapes with architecture to create practical and beautiful high-rise buildings.

Figure 41 The image of a pavilion with stairs on one side, reflecting the creativity and imagination of Han Dynasty architectural art (rubbing)

Source: provided by a personal collector (2023.08)

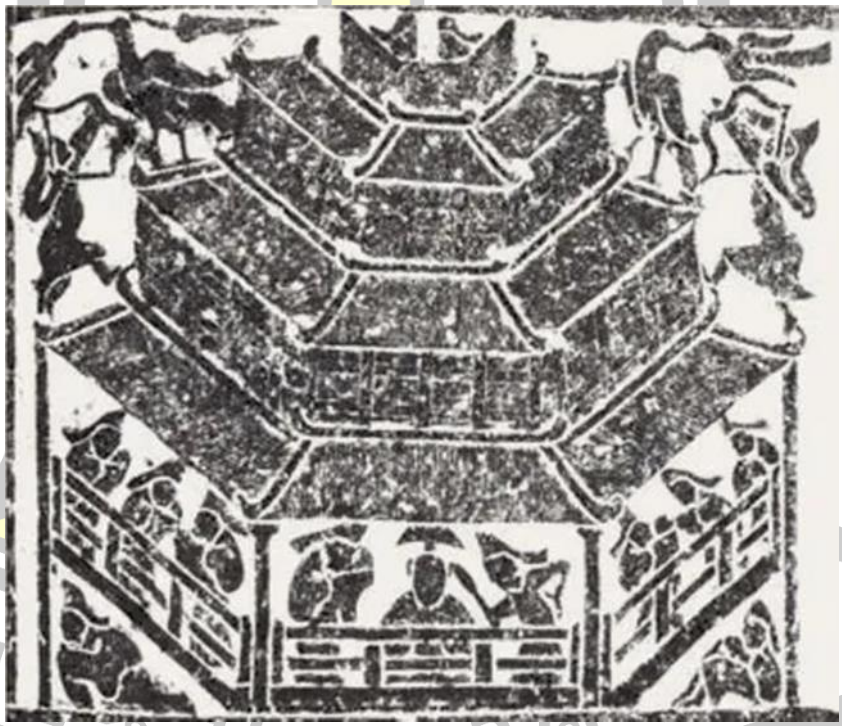

Figure 42 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a three-story pavilion (rubbing)

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

In addition, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also show the building materials and craftsmanship of the time （Figure 42）. Wood is light and easy to process, so it is

widely used; stone is strong and durable and is mostly used for important components; bricks and tiles are used for roofs and walls to play a waterproof and heat-insulating role. These material choices reflect the wisdom of the craftsmen and reveal the cultural concepts of Han Dynasty society. For example, the exquisite carvings of the palace show the royal pursuit of beauty, and the simple style of the temple reflects the people's piety to religion and the importance of ancestor worship. (Liu Guangji, 2024, p67).

The architectural depictions in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not simply imitations of real buildings but are infused with the craftsmen's artistic imagination and aesthetic concepts. Through delicate brushstrokes and superb carving techniques, they depicted the buildings vividly and full of artistic appeal. These stone reliefs are not only valuable materials for our study of Han Dynasty architectural culture, but also an important carrier of the traditional culture and art of the Chinese nation.

Figure 43 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a dou and a sheng (rubbing)
Source: Provided by a personal collector (2024.04)

The Han Dynasty was a key stage in the development of ancient Chinese architecture. Although very few physical examples of buildings remain due to the long time, scholars have gradually found important clues to the wooden construction technology of the Han Dynasty by studying architectural artifacts, stone reliefs and cliff

tomb structures. Studies have shown that the main structure and load-bearing method of Han Dynasty buildings have undergone significant changes. The traditional wooden frame was further developed and optimized at the time, especially when combined with rammed earth walls, which achieved the expansion of building height and plane layout. This technological innovation not only made the building more large-scale, but also laid a solid foundation for the development of wooden architecture in later generations.

The high-rise buildings in the Han Dynasty were diverse in form, and the architectural design gradually broke through the traditional limitations. (Figure 43) The combined use of beams, columns and brackets increased the building height and increased the ductility of the eaves. The clever use of brackets and brackets not only improved the stability of the structure, but also gave the building more aesthetic elements. Although the connection between brackets and beams was not close enough in the Han Dynasty, these technical explorations have become an important bud of the ancient Chinese architectural system, providing a theoretical basis and practical experience for the maturity and perfection of future wooden structures (Huang Fang, 2024, p.23).

Although the main function of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is to decorate tombs and ancestral halls, the architectural images in them provide valuable information about the architectural form, structure and decorative style of the Han Dynasty. The buildings depicted in these stone reliefs not only show the design characteristics of Han Dynasty architecture, but also reflect the cultural concepts and social aesthetic orientations of the time. Through these images, we can see the symmetry of the structural layout of Han Dynasty architecture, the rigor of the axis design, and the compatibility of gorgeous and simple styles in decoration. In addition, although some of the themes in the portraits may be symbolic and may not fully represent actual architectural practice, the architectural concepts and cultural images they convey are of great significance for understanding the architectural thought of the Han Dynasty.

In conclusion, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are not only masterpieces of decorative art, but also important materials for studying Han Dynasty architecture. They demonstrate the diversity and technical level of architecture at that time and reflect the cultural values and aesthetic pursuits of Han Dynasty society. Through these artworks, we can get a glimpse of the creativity of Han Dynasty craftsmen in the field of architecture, as well as their continuous exploration and pursuit in technical and artistic expression. These stone reliefs provide an important window for future generations to study the development of Han Dynasty architecture and help us to more fully understand the evolution of ancient Chinese architectural technology and its profound influence on later generations.

3.2.2 Clothing Culture

The female costumes of the Han Dynasty show the spirit and style of traditional Chinese culture. Hanfu belongs to the category of art. In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, paintings are used as artistic carriers, which makes the female costumes have the aesthetic characteristics of sculpture art and painting art. It can be said that art is nested, which also creates the complexity, richness and diversity of the cultural aesthetics of female costumes in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty (Liu Pingping, 2022, p. 56). The costumes, accessories and hairstyles of the characters in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty provide valuable visual materials for understanding the clothing culture of the Han Dynasty. In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty (Figure 44), we can see various clothing styles, from luxurious long robes to simple short clothes, all of which reflect the exquisite craftsmanship and unique aesthetics of the people of the Han Dynasty.

Figure 44 Han Dynasty clothing in Han Dynasty stone reliefs
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

The Han Dynasty was a period of high development of spiritual and material civilization. After Zhang Qian opened the Silk Road in the Western Han Dynasty, foreign civilizations poured into the Han Dynasty, which was a period of cultural integration. This was particularly evident in people's dress. The clothing of the Han Dynasty had a strict hierarchy, and the difference between the clothing of the royal nobles and the lower class was huge and obvious (Chen Yanan, 2022, p.55-57).

Figure 45 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting the clothing of the lower classes of the Han Dynasty (rubbing)
Source: Provided by a personal collector (2024.04)

From the existing pictures (Figure 45), the clothing style of the Han Dynasty laborers was relatively simple and practical, showing a casual but diverse style. The laborers' attire included buns, small hats or scarves, and sometimes even hats to block the sun. The clothing usually had a cross-collar design, the hem was knee-length, and the sleeves were narrow, so that they could do physical labor. They tied a scarf around their waists and wore boots and shoes on their feet. In some cases, they walked barefoot. These details not only reflect the daily life of the laborers in the Han Dynasty, but also reveal their pragmatism and tenacity in the difficult environment.

In addition, the hairstyles depicted in the stone reliefs also provide rich clues for studying the social culture of the Han Dynasty. Most men's hairstyles were tied up or crowned, and the overall style was simple and practical, which not only matched their social status but also met their daily needs. In contrast, women's hairstyles were more diverse, such as high buns and double buns, which fully reflected the diversity and refinement of women in the Han Dynasty in their aesthetic pursuits and attitudes towards life. Especially in the stone reliefs, women's hair accessories were often carefully designed, which not only showed their status in the family and society, but also reflected the aesthetic standards and cultural recognition of women's beauty in the society at that time.

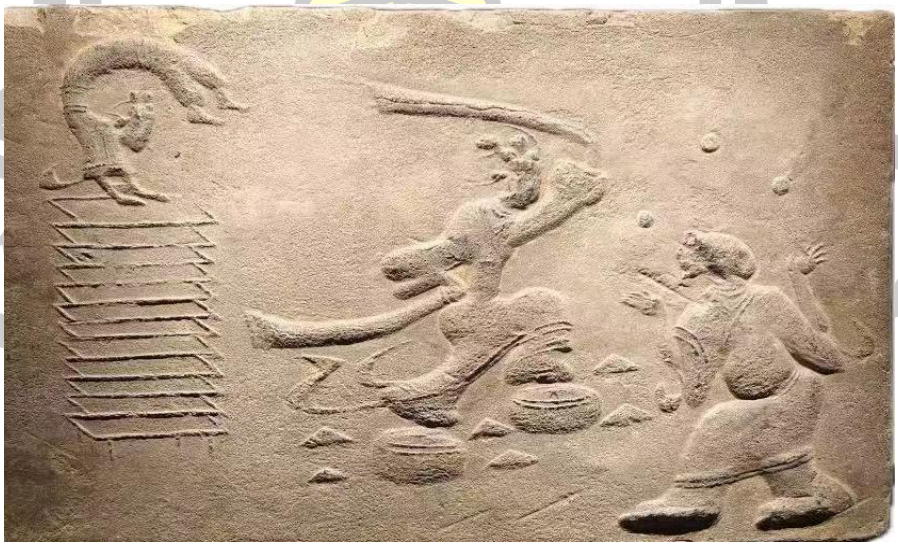

Figure 46 A Han Dynasty stone relief showing Han Dynasty dance costumes

Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

As shown in Figure 46, we can see that the clothing system of women in the Han Dynasty basically inherited the upper garment and lower skirt after the Shang Dynasty. After the development of the Han Dynasty, the deep-collared robe has become a distinctive and very popular clothing of the Chinese nation (Du Weidong and Du Yifei, 2023, p.107).

In short, these images not only show the clothing and hairstyles of Han Dynasty workers, but also open a window to the daily life and cultural world of the Han Dynasty. Through the study of these clothing and hairstyles, we can have a deeper understanding of the class structure, living habits and cultural concepts behind the Han Dynasty society. This attention to detail makes the Han Dynasty stone reliefs a valuable material for exploring and reproducing the life of ancient society, providing us with a more vivid and specific historical picture.

3.2.3 Food Culture

There is a proverb in China that "food is the first necessity of the people", which shows the importance of food in the hearts of Chinese people. From the diet of eating raw meat and drinking blood in the Paleolithic Age to the initial formation of Chinese food culture in the Zhou and Qin Dynasties, the Han Dynasty, which experienced the rich development of food culture, was the first important period of the prosperity of Chinese food culture during the four hundred years of the Han Dynasty. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Henan, Shandong, Jiangsu, Sichuan and other places are powerful witnesses of this historical process (Xu Ying, Liu Wenping, 2004, pp. 14).

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Figure 47 Han Dynasty stone reliefs showing banquets and cooking in the Han Dynasty

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

In these Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the banquet scenes, food utensils and kitchen utensils provide us with a unique perspective to deeply understand the food culture of the Han Dynasty. These meticulous portrayals not only show the eating habits and food types of the Han people, but also reflect the dining etiquette and social outlook of the time. As shown in Figure 47, the lower part of the image shows a kitchen or sacrificial preparation scene, and the characters can be seen cooking or other food-related activities. This shows the daily appearance of life in the Han Dynasty and the importance attached to food.This scene not only reflects the richness and diversity of the Han people's food culture, but also reflects their cooking skills and the actual situation of their daily life.

Figure 48 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting barbecued food
Source: Photographed by the researcher at Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (August 2023)

Figure 48 vividly shows the details of the daily cooking activities of the Han people. The two figures on the left and right sides of the picture are busy. The figure on the left is concentrating on processing food, while the figure on the right is holding food similar to skewers and is about to put it in or take it out of the pot, showing the process of grilling or cooking in the Han Dynasty. A brazier or grill is depicted in the center, and tableware and food containers are neatly placed around it, fully demonstrating the common cooking tools and methods in the ancient kitchen at that time. These details not only provide us with an intuitive image of ancient cooking, but also reproduce important scenes in the dietary life of the Han people.

In addition, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also depict a variety of food utensils, such as bronze, lacquer and pottery. These utensils have various shapes and complete functions, reflecting the diversity of the Han Dynasty's food culture. For example, cooking utensils such as bronze tripods and cauldrons are not only practical in daily life, but also symbolize power and status; lacquerware tableware shows the society's pursuit of high-quality life and artistic aesthetics at that time. The exquisite craftsmanship and

decorative style of these utensils not only meet the actual use needs, but also reveal the Han people's pursuit of aesthetics in food.

Figure 49 A scene depicting a Han Dynasty kitchen and banquet, with barbecue and hot pot

Source: Photographed by the researcher at the Xuzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (August 2023)

The depictions of kitchen utensils in the relief stones are also rich, showing the use of equipment such as stoves, knives, and cooking utensils. The depictions of these kitchen utensils reveal the progress of iron smelting technology and the diversified development of cooking techniques in the Han Dynasty. From simple grilling and boiling to complex cooking methods, these scenes show the innovation and progress of cooking methods and techniques in Han Dynasty society. In particular, the design and use of stoves not only reflects the Han people's demand for efficient cooking, but also shows the rationality and practicality of the kitchen space layout at that time.

For example, a Han Dynasty pictorial stone unearthed in Hanwang Town, Tongshan District, Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, features a kitchen scene (Figure 49). The

image is divided into three layers. The top layer depicts a chef, with one hand fanning and the other grilling skewers. The skewers are forked, forming a "U" shape. This type of double-pronged iron skewer is very practical and was specifically designed to grill two skewers of meat simultaneously. Even in contemporary Chinese society, many barbecue restaurants still use this type of skewer. The second layer shows a hotpot scene. The food in Han paintings is a history of food and institutions in the Han Dynasty, recording the ingredients, food processing and production methods, dining styles, etc. (Wang Qian and Song Wei, 2016, p.106).

Figure 50 “Welcoming Guests and Banquet” reflects the lively scene of wealthy nobles in Xuzhou during the Han Dynasty entertaining guests
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Throughout the Han Dynasty, the country was strong, the people lived a prosperous life, and the style of feasting and entertainment prevailed. "Welcoming Guests and Banquet" (Figure 50) reflects the lively scene of the wealthy nobles in Xuzhou area in the Han Dynasty entertaining guests. It depicts the scenes of welcoming guests, paying homage, and feasting. According to the etiquette of the Han Dynasty, the host should be a senior official with a salary of 2,000 stones. When the guests pay homage, there is a queue of carriages and horses, indicating that their status is extraordinary. Men and women sit separately in the hall, reflecting the custom of "men and women sitting at different seats" in the Han Dynasty. Outside the hall, there are

more than ten servants waiting to be called at any time. The picture reflects the actual situation of the aristocratic family's courtesy and interpersonal relations.

In short, the dietary culture in the stone reliefs not only records the rich details of the banquet scenes, kitchen layouts and food utensils at that time, but also shows the dietary customs, etiquette norms and cultural connotations of the Han Dynasty society. Through vivid portrayals, these stone reliefs reveal the lifestyles, technological progress and cultural values of all social classes in the Han Dynasty, becoming an important historical material for understanding the social outlook of the Han Dynasty. Studying these dietary cultural scenes helps to fully understand the material life and spiritual pursuits of the Han Dynasty society and provides valuable historical references for contemporary cultural research.

3.2.4 Transportation culture

Among the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, the pictures of carriages and horses traveling account for a large proportion. This is related to the economy, politics, lifestyle, and ideology and culture of the time. In the early Western Han Dynasty, society was turbulent due to wars and the economy was depressed. By the time of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, after seventy years of recovery, the economy was prosperous and the feudal dynasty was strong, providing conditions for the construction of luxurious tombs. Chariots and horses were originally battlefield tools, but with economic development and the strengthening of national strength, they gradually became the means of transportation for the royal family and nobles. According to archaeological statistics, 75 of the 264 complete stone relief tombs are engraved with pictures of carriages and horses traveling. The numerous stone reliefs of carriages and horses traveling fully reflect the characteristics of the development of transportation tools and the diversity of transportation methods in the Han Dynasty (Huang Yongfei, 2015, p.23).

The frequent appearance of carriages, boats and other means of transportation in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reveals the transportation conditions and characteristics

of the Han Dynasty society. From the image in Figure 51, we can see that the structure of the Han Dynasty carriage includes wheels, shafts, carriages and other parts, and the decoration of the carriage is also quite exquisite, such as the gorgeous canopy and exquisite carriage accessories, which reflect the exquisite skills and pursuit of beauty of the Han Dynasty craftsmen. In addition, there are many depictions of scenes of carriages and horses traveling, such as hunting and sightseeing, which provide us with intuitive evidence of the lifestyle of the Han Dynasty society. Under the advocacy of the ruling class, the feudal rich and powerful even regarded carriages and horses as a symbol of status. The combined effect of these factors has contributed to the prevalence of carriages and horses traveling in the Han Dynasty tomb stone reliefs (Xin Lixiang, 1999, pp. 47-63).

Figure 51 Chariot and horse painting in Han Dynasty stone relief
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

In addition, ships, as another important means of transportation, also frequently appear in Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Figure 52). The depiction of these ships shows the development of water transportation in the Han Dynasty and reflects the frequent activities of water trade and social interaction at that time. The scene of ships sailing on rivers not only shows the technological progress of transportation in Han Dynasty

society, but also reveals the economic connection and cultural exchange between regions.

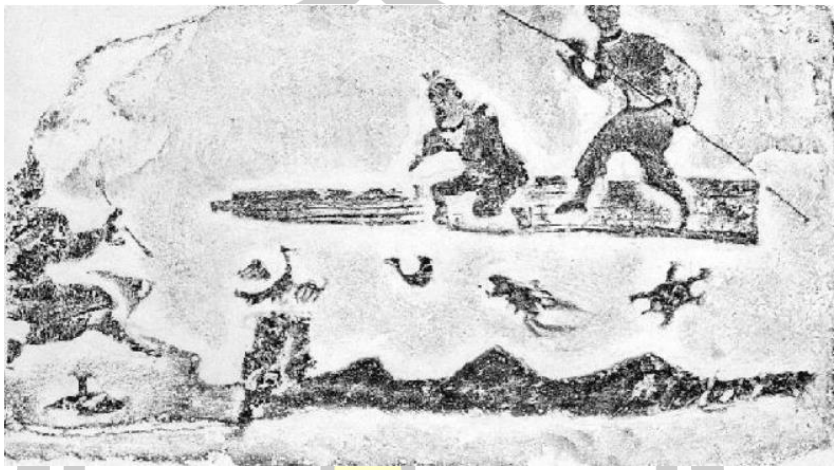

Figure 52 Ships in Han Dynasty stone reliefs
Source: ttps://baijiahao.baidu.com/s? (2024.04)

In conclusion, the chariots and boats in the Han Dynasty relief stone are important materials for studying the social economy, transportation development and cultural value of the Han Dynasty. These images not only reflect the practical application of transportation tools in daily life and social structure, but also reveal the Han people's concept of identity, power and pursuit of aesthetics. The widespread existence of chariots and boats shows the prosperity of the social economy, the development of transportation network and the stability of social hierarchy system in the Han Dynasty. The rich information conveyed by these images is of great significance for our in-depth understanding of the social structure, transportation mode and cultural connotation of the Han Dynasty, and provides an important reference for the study of transportation history in modern society.

3.2.5 Production activities

As we all know, agriculture is the foundation of the country and the people, and it is also a strategic resource for war. Without the development of agricultural productivity, it is difficult for society to develop and progress and maintain sustainable

prosperity and stability. The description of the agricultural civilization of the Han Dynasty in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty is very detailed. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs on agricultural themes are rich in content, including hunting, farming,

Seeding, picking mulberry leaves, grazing, fishing, breeding, brewing, making farm tools, etc., reflect the development of agricultural productivity in Han Dynasty society. This fully reflects the mainstream concept of Han Dynasty society that advocates agricultural production and is based on the state (Ji Zhouli, 2023.p72).

The depiction of production and agricultural culture also occupies an important position. These portraits not only vividly show the agricultural production and handicrafts of Han Dynasty society, but also provide us with valuable visual materials for a deep understanding of the social and economic structure and cultural life at that time. Common agricultural production scenes include plowing, sowing, harvesting, threshing (Figure 53), etc. In addition, various agricultural tools such as plows, hoes, sickles, etc. often appear in the stone reliefs. The styles and usage methods of these agricultural tools reflect the level and development of agricultural technology in the Han Dynasty.

Figure 53 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting agricultural production activities
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

In addition to agricultural production, Han Dynasty stone reliefs also depict a large number of scenes of handicrafts. In terms of textiles, as shown in Figure 54, the entire process of spinning and weaving by women in the Han Dynasty is shown, from twisting, drawing the warp, putting on the loom to weaving, each process is vivid. These portraits not only reflect the exquisite textile technology of the Han Dynasty, but also reflect the praise of women's hardworking qualities in society at that time.

Figure 54 Textile painting in a Han Dynasty stone relief (rubbing)

Source: Provided by a personal collector (2024.04)

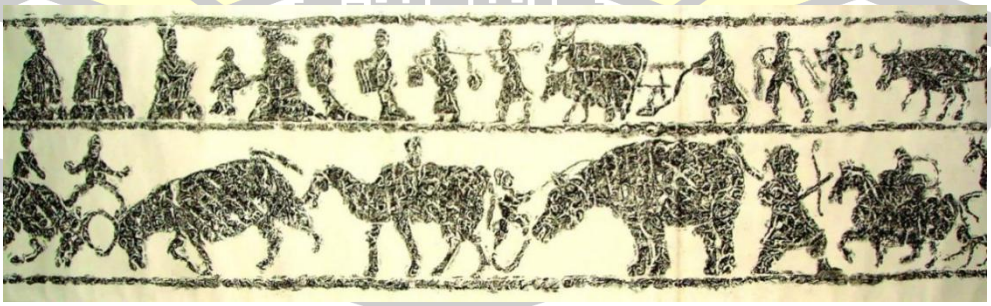

Figure 55 Oxen plowing in a Han Dynasty stone relief (rubbing)

Source: http://m.qfxuan.com/nd.jsp?id=7058(2024.04)

Among the pictures of Han Dynasty relief stone that show people's life at that time, the most precious one is the "ox plowing picture" that reflects agricultural production and life. As shown in Figure 55, this is a rubbing of a Han Dynasty relief stone unearthed from Zoucheng, Shandong. The upper part of the painting shows the scene of ox plowing: two oxen pull the plow, followed by farmers and carriages. The left side of the scene is blurred. The lower part depicts entertainment activities: people fight beasts and bulls, and there are shepherds cheering, as well as riding camels, leading cows, riding horses and shooting arrows. The picture vividly shows the simple folk customs and agricultural policy of the Han Dynasty. The Han Dynasty promoted the rapid development of wheat planting by promoting advanced farming techniques and tools, and agriculture became the foundation of economic prosperity. The ox plowing pictures commonly seen in relief stones not only show agricultural production, but also reflect the relationship between landlords and farmers. As a new form of production organization, farms promoted the development of social productivity. The relief stones of the Han Dynasty recorded agriculture and handicrafts, which have artistic and historical value and provide important materials for the study of Han Dynasty culture.

Figure 56 This wine-making picture shows the detailed wine-making process in the Han Dynasty.

Source: Photographed by researcherr at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

Drinking is still a luxury for ordinary people, but people can participate in wine making. Such Han Dynasty brick and stone reliefs can be found in many places. The "Wine Making Picture" of the Eastern Han Dynasty unearthed in Tuqiao, Sichuan (Figure 56) shows many aspects of wine making at that time: on the upper rectangular wooden table, six pottery jars are placed side by side, which may contain steamed rice for wine making. After fermentation, it can be brewed into rice wine. Under the wooden table, four large basins with lipped mouths and a statue and a pot are placed side by side, which should be used to receive the rice wine poured out of the jars. A person stands on the right side of the wooden table, seemingly observing the fermentation of the rice in the jar. The four people below the utensils, one is holding a large-mouthed pointed cloth net to filter the lees, one is holding a basin to pour unfiltered wine into a cloth bag, one is pouring wine into a pot, and another is squatting in front of the jar to check the quality of the wine. The four people are surrounded by wine vessels such as statues, pots, and jars, which shows the exquisite and complex wine making technology of the Han Dynasty.

The depictions of production and agricultural culture in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are an important window into the study of Han Dynasty society and culture. They use a unique visual language to show us the labor life, economic development and cultural features of Han Dynasty society, and provide us with valuable information and inspiration for a deeper understanding of Han Dynasty history and culture. Through the careful analysis and in-depth study of these portraits, we can more comprehensively understand the rich connotation and unique value of Han Dynasty culture, and further promote the development and progress of Han Dynasty history and culture research.

Analysis and Summary

As an important cultural carrier, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty fully demonstrate the material and cultural value of the Han Dynasty society. First of all, the stone reliefs record the common cultural identity and lifestyle of the society at that time, from the grandeur of the architecture to the exquisiteness of the clothing, to the etiquette

and banquet scenes, reflecting the common values and standardized lifestyle of the Han Dynasty society. These cultural elements not only had a far-reaching influence in the Han Dynasty, but also acted on later generations through historical inheritance, and had a lasting impact on architecture, art, clothing and other fields.

Secondly, the standardization of the content of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is reflected in the standardization of architecture, etiquette and lifestyle, reflecting the institutionalized structure of society. The stone reliefs depict various aspects of Han Dynasty society in detail, such as agriculture, transportation, and diet, showing a rich and diverse social outlook. These images are not only artistic treasures, but also provide key information for studying Han Dynasty culture.

Finally, by deeply studying the cultural information in the stone reliefs, we can better understand the cultural connotation of Han Dynasty society, thereby promoting the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional culture. The costumes, architecture, life scenes, etc. in the stone reliefs reveal the aesthetic concepts, craftsmanship and social structure of the time, providing important inspiration for modern cultural research.

In short, the physical cultural value of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is not only reflected in its vivid reproduction of the social culture of the Han Dynasty, but more importantly, it has a profound impact on the art, history and culture research of later generations. It provides us with valuable historical evidence and helps us understand and interpret the history and culture of the Han Dynasty more accurately. In modern society, the physical cultural value of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is not only of historical significance, but also of practical significance. It allows us to cherish and inherit the excellent traditional Chinese culture more, and also provides rich resources and sources of inspiration for our cultural and creative industries.

3.3 Communication culture value

People live in social relationships. The satisfaction of people's material and spiritual needs cannot be separated from the premise of communication. Therefore, people have the need for communication. Some ethical norms, etiquette and customs, and legal systems in China's excellent traditional culture can help people deal with the relationship between people and the relationship between people and society.

3.3.1 Daily interactions

The images of social interactions in Han Dynasty stone relief art are mainly reflected in the depiction of various life scenes. These scenes not only show the lifestyle of people at that time, but also reveal their social habits and etiquette norms.

In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, social interaction images often show the social activities and lifestyles of the Han people through vivid character modeling and complex scene composition. These images not only record the etiquette, customs and habits of the people at that time, but also reflect the interpersonal relationships and moral concepts of Han Dynasty society.

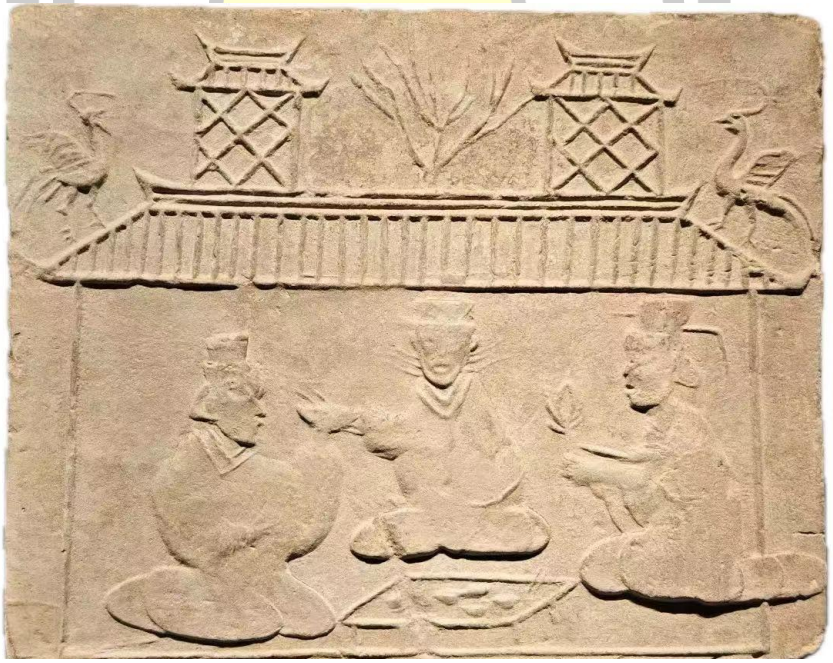

Figure 57 depicts a gathering of three people.

Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

Figure 57 depicts an indoor scene with three figures, two of whom are sitting on the ground and facing the central figure. There are two birds on the roof, symbolizing auspiciousness. The architectural background shows the characteristics of Han Dynasty architecture, such as eaves and pavilions. The interaction between the three people can be seen as communication and exchange within the family or clan, showing a harmonious family relationship. This is in line with the Confucian concept of filial piety and family harmony. Judging from the postures and expressions of the figures, this picture may also reflect the culture of Han Dynasty society that attaches great importance to etiquette and norms, and the interactions between the characters are full of etiquette.

Figure 58 Banquet scene with ball-spitting and sword-dancing performances
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The Eastern Han Dynasty Wanjian Banquet and Dance Picture Brick unearthed in Anren Town, Dayi County, Sichuan (Figure 58) clearly shows the etiquette of sitting at a banquet for nobles. There are 4 people feasting and 4 people performing in the

painting. According to the records of "Rites of Rites: Rural Drinking Ceremony", the seats of guests should be arranged near the window, and the guests should sit facing south. The seat of the host is set on the steps on the east side, facing west. Each guest has an independent seat, and the arrangement of seats should be distinguished between the primary and the secondary. People of different identities and status cannot sit in adjacent seats. These details reflect the social interaction activities at that time.

Figure 59 depicts the welcoming banquet
Source: Photographed by the researcher (August 2023)

Figure 59 shows a bas-relief picture of welcoming guests. The picture is divided into two parts. The lower part depicts a welcoming scene: in front of the tall Zimuque, the host is bowing respectfully to welcome the visiting guests, and there are a light car and a large car parked on the right. The upper part shows two halls with high curtains hanging inside and wine utensils on the tables. The host and hostess and the guests are talking happily in their respective halls, as if the old saying "It is a pleasure to have friends coming from afar!" This picture vividly reflects the scene of the feudal aristocracy in the Han Dynasty paying attention to etiquette and warmly entertaining guests.

By deeply analyzing the daily interaction images in the above-mentioned Han Dynasty stone reliefs, we can find the multiple meanings contained in them. On the one

hand, these images vividly reproduce the social life and interpersonal communication of the Han Dynasty people through specific character actions and expressions, as well as detailed depictions of scenes. On the other hand, they also express the Han Dynasty people's pursuit of harmonious social relations and respect for moral norms such as courtesy, righteousness, integrity and shame through symbols and metaphors. It is worth noting that the social interaction images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also reflect the diversity and inclusiveness of the society at that time. It can enable us to have a more comprehensive understanding of the style and cultural heritage of the Han Dynasty society, thus providing us with useful reference and inspiration for inheriting and promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture.

3.3.2 Folk customs

As a unique art form, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty not only reflect the aesthetic concepts of the time, but also deeply reflect the folk customs of the Han Dynasty society. Through the careful study of these stone reliefs, we can get a glimpse of the customs and habits of the Han people and many details of social culture, and more deeply show the beliefs of the Han people.

In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, folk customs are expressed in various forms, such as scenes of sacrifice, weddings, festivals, etc. Among them, the depiction of marriage rituals is rich and colorful, showing the importance that society attaches to these important life events.

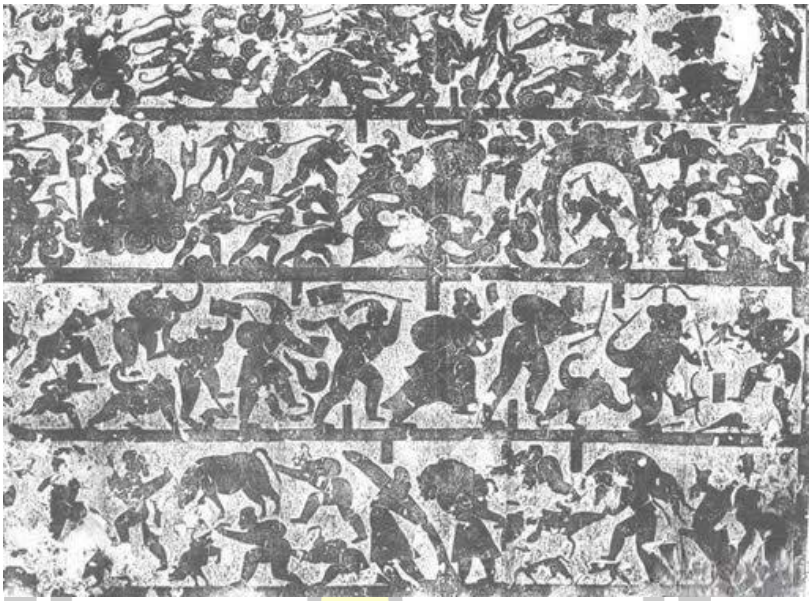

Figure 60 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting the God of Wind and the God of Rain (rubbing)

Source: https://www.google.com/search ? (2024.04)

Archaeologists discovered a "Wind and Rain Picture" (Figure 60) in a stone tomb with reliefs in Wangzhuang, Nanyang. The upper part of the picture shows three people pulling a cart, with a driver holding the reins with both hands, and another god sitting on the cart. The wheels are composed of five stars connected by lines. In the lower part of the picture, there are four gods, with their hair thrown aside, each holding a large jar in their arms, with the mouth of the jar tipped down, and water pouring down like a waterfall. On the right side of the picture is a giant, naked, kneeling on the ground with his legs open, and blowing air. The four gods holding the jar and pouring water in the painting are the rain masters, and the one blowing air with his mouth open is the wind master.

In wedding scenes, the bride and groom are often dressed in gorgeous clothes, the ceremony is grand, and family members and guests gather together to congratulate the newlyweds. The complexity and solemnity of the wedding not only shows the characteristics of Han Dynasty weddings, but also reflects the core position of the family in society and the importance of marriage.

Figure 61 Wedding images show the marriage customs of the Han Dynasty
Source: Photographed by the researcher at Xuzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (August 2023)

From the Han Dynasty stone relief in Figure 61 we can see a detailed wedding scene, including the bride and groom and family members of both parties. The groom is usually depicted as a burly and imposing figure, while the bride is graceful and well-mannered, reflecting the ancient aesthetic standards for both parties in marriage. The "Happy Ties" picture not only shows the lively scene of the wedding, but also deeply reflects the marriage concept of Han Dynasty society. It emphasizes the importance of marriage as the foundation of family and social stability, as well as people's expectations for a happy marriage and family harmony. The differences in the family residences and the wedding procession of the man and woman in the portraits can also give us a glimpse into the hierarchy of Han Dynasty society. This difference, to a certain extent, reflects the ancient people's emphasis on the concept of "equal status" in marriage. In the Han Dynasty, the conclusion of marriage was strictly regulated by laws and etiquette. According to the "Book of Han Ritual Music", men reached the age of marriage at the age of 20 and women at the age of 15. Marriage in the Han Dynasty emphasized equal status, that is, only families with equal family background, social status, and economic conditions were suitable for marriage. In addition, marriage in the

Han Dynasty emphasized the orders of parents and the words of matchmakers. Marriages are mostly arranged by parents through matchmakers. Self-determined marriages are relatively rare, and the conclusion of a marriage requires the consent of both families.

The marriage system of the Han Dynasty has positive significance in maintaining family and social stability, protecting the rights and obligations of both parties in marriage, and focusing on children's education and filial piety. However, gender inequality, limited freedom of marriage, difficulties in dissolving marriages, and restrictions on women's remarriage have also exposed the shortcomings of this system. By analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the marriage system of the Han Dynasty, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of the family relationships and cultural values of ancient Chinese society and provide a useful reference for the study and improvement of the modern marriage system.

The representation of festival celebration images in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is mainly reflected in the vivid depiction of various festival activities. These stone reliefs not only show the customs and habits of the society at that time, but also reflect people’s love for life and their vision for a better future (Zhao Ling, 2020, p.102).

Figure 62 Enjoying music and meeting guests, depicting grand celebrations in the Han Dynasty, a stone relief from the Han Dynasty

Source: https://jres2023.xhby.net/js/wh/202004/t20200429l(2024.04)

In the Han Dynasty, festival celebrations were an important part of social life. The images of festival celebrations in the stone reliefs often appear as cheerful and lively scenes, full of a strong breath of life. In Figure 62, people can be seen sitting together, toasting their glasses and drinking to celebrate the joy of the harvest; or holding grand celebrations outdoors with singing and dancing, and it was very lively. These images not only show the grand celebrations of festivals in the Han Dynasty, but also reveal people's yearning for a harmonious and beautiful life. In the stone reliefs, we can see the celebration scenes of various traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc. Each festival has its own specific celebration methods and cultural connotations, which are carefully portrayed in the stone reliefs.

New Year's Day is the beginning of the new year. In the minds of the ancients, this time of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new must be celebrated, so festivals like "celebrating the new year" have a very long history in China. Especially after Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, the New Year's Day was officially separated from the winter solstice and became an independent festival. After that, the celebration became grander (Wang Hui, 2017, P.136).

On the New Year's Day of the Han Dynasty, the Han court held a large-scale court meeting, called the "Zhengdan Conference", where all civil and military officials would present gifts to the emperor. The Zhengdan Conference was held at the Deyang Palace in Luoyang City during the Eastern Han Dynasty. The general process was as follows:

First, the ministers and foreign envoys came to the palace to pay their respects to the emperor, and then the accountants of the local counties and prefectures came to pay their respects and present the local revenue and expenditure documents for the past year. This New Year's Day meeting was not just a ceremony, but also had a bit of political flavor in it.

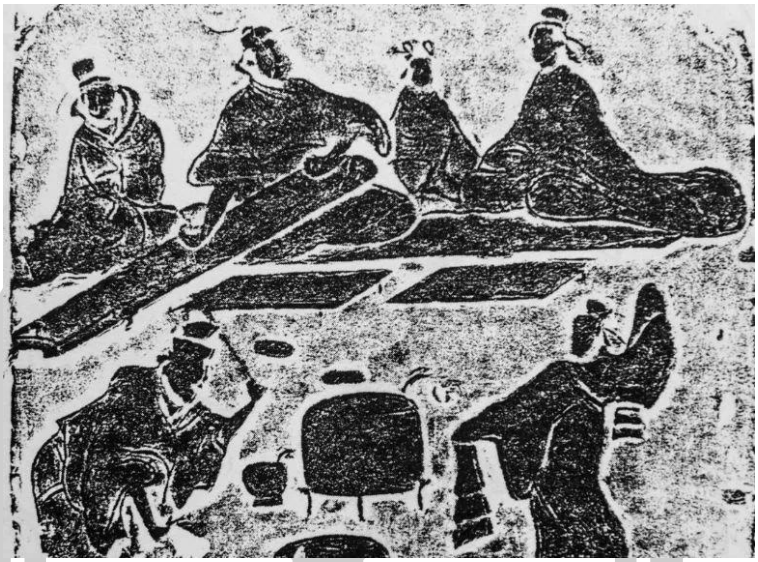

Figure 63 Banquet in a Han Dynasty stone relief
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Then, as a thank you for the gifts from the civil and military officials, the emperor would often give a banquet after the worship (Figure 63). According to historical records, the banquet included music and various theatrical performances (Figure 64), which was quite lively.

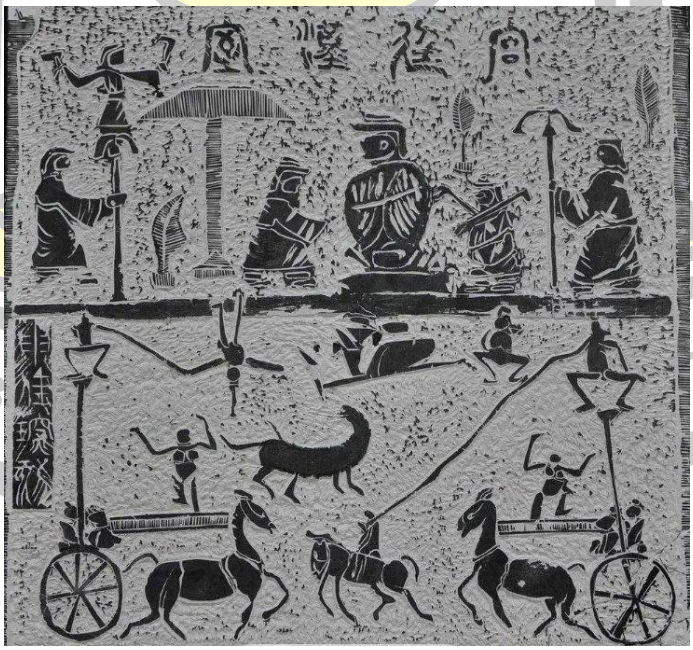

Figure 64 Hundred-character performances in Han Dynasty stone reliefs
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

New Year's Day, known as "Yuandan" in the Han Dynasty, was not just a simple celebration; it was the most significant festival of the year, deeply embedded in both the political and social fabric of the time. The day held immense importance for both the government and the people, symbolizing the transition from one year to the next and offering an opportunity to reflect on the past and express hopes for the future.

For the government, the official New Year's Day celebrations often carried political significance. These grand events, held in the imperial court, were meticulously planned and executed with a clear purpose in mind—to reinforce the emperor's researcherity, demonstrate the unity of the empire, and project an image of stability and prosperity. The ceremonies included elaborate rituals, presentations of tribute from various regions, and grand banquets attended by officials, where loyalty to the emperor was reaffirmed. These celebrations were designed to solidify the social order and to remind the populace of the emperor's central role in maintaining harmony and prosperity in the empire.

In contrast, the folk celebrations of New Year's Day were simpler and more heartfelt, focusing on the joys of family and community. These celebrations were deeply rooted in the everyday lives of the people, and while they lacked the political overtones of the official festivities, they were rich in cultural significance. The primary aim of these folk celebrations was to commemorate the hard work and struggles of the past year and to express hope and optimism for the coming year.

One of the central features of the New Year's Day festivities among the common people was the New Year's Eve banquet, which was imbued with a genuine spirit of joy and renewal. These banquets were typically organized by families or clans and marked the culmination of the year's efforts. The gathering would start on the night before New Year's Day and continue until the early hours of the new year. This practice laid the groundwork for what we now recognize as the New Year's Eve dinner and the tradition of staying up to welcome the new year, known as "shou sui."

One particularly interesting custom from the Han Dynasty was the tradition of not finishing all the food at the New Year's Eve dinner. It was considered important to leave some leftovers, which were then scattered on the streets the next morning as a symbolic act. This practice, known as "staying overnight for the New Year's Eve meal," was believed to bring good fortune for the year ahead, representing a deliberate gesture of abundance and continuity. The act of scattering the leftovers served as a ritual to bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new one, embodying the hope for a year filled with prosperity and success.

This ritualistic approach to the New Year's Day celebrations reflects the Han people's deep connection to their cultural traditions and their belief in the power of rituals to influence the course of the year ahead. The practice of leaving leftovers was not just about ensuring that there was always enough, but it also symbolized the idea that life and its blessings should overflow into the new year, ensuring continued prosperity and good fortune. This custom, rich in symbolism, illustrates the Han Dynasty's unique blend of practicality and spirituality in their approach to life and their observance of the annual cycle.

Figure 65 The scene of buying wine in a Han Dynasty stone relief
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

Since it is a family gathering, drinking is inevitable. Therefore, buying wine is also essential (Figure 65). However, drinking in ancient times, especially drinking during the New Year, is different from the big bowls of drinking we see on TV. It is a kind of etiquette with relatively strict rules. These rules are concentrated on the order of toasting. On New Year's Day, after the patriarch of the family leads the whole family to worship the ancestors, they will perform the drinking ceremony: starting from the youngest, they will toast to the elders in the family in turn, and after the toasts, they will start drinking from the youngest. The former expresses the respect of the younger generation for the elders, and the latter means that the younger one grows one year older, and the older one loses one year older.

Figure 66 This picture of eating and enjoying music shows the rich and colorful life in the Han Dynasty
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

The festival scenes in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty vividly show the important festivals and folk customs in the society at that time (Figure 66). These stone carvings not only record the entertainment activities, religious rituals and sacrificial

scenes during the festivals, but also reflect the importance that the people of the Han Dynasty attached to social, family and religious beliefs. Common festival scenes in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty include banquets, singing and dancing, amusement and competition. These pictures show the joyful atmosphere of people during the festivals. These activities are not only a form of entertainment, but also an important part of the festival culture at that time. Through these depictions, we can understand how the people of the Han Dynasty enhanced family and social relationships through festival activities.

Analysis and summary

The festival celebration culture displayed by these stone reliefs not only enriches our understanding of Han Dynasty society, but also provides valuable historical data for contemporary cultural heritage. In contemporary society, many traditional festivals still retain ancient cultural elements, such as the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival. By studying the festival celebration scenes of the Han Dynasty, we can better understand the origin and evolution of these traditional festivals and innovate and inherit them in combination with modern life.

In addition, the festival culture in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also reminds us that in the rapidly developing modern society, we should attach importance to the unity of family and community and enhance cultural identity and social cohesion through festival activities. This kind of cultural inheritance is not only a continuation in form, but also a re-recognition and promotion of traditional values.

While pursuing freedom and equality, modern society should also pay attention to moral education and maintain social order and moral customs through etiquette and behavioral norms. Etiquette is the external manifestation of moral norms. Modern society should, based on inheriting traditional etiquette, make it play a greater role in contemporary life and promote social harmony. The way of celebrating festivals in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reminds us that festivals are an important carrier of national culture. Modern society should vigorously promote traditional festival culture, enhance

social cohesion and promote national spirit through rich and diverse celebrations. Modern society should attach importance to the protection of traditional folk customs, and at the same time innovate in combination with the development of the times, so that traditional culture can be revitalized in the new social environment and promote the development of cultural diversity. When building a harmonious society, modern society should draw on historical experience, enhance the civilized quality of social members by strengthening moral education and etiquette norms, and promote social stability and development.

3.3.3 Religious activities

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the important position of religious beliefs and rituals in Han Dynasty society. These beliefs and rituals are not only the core of the spiritual life of the Han people, but also the key factors of social norms and cultural inheritance. In these stone carvings, religious beliefs and rituals are vividly reflected through various images and scenes, providing us with valuable information for studying the religious culture of Han Dynasty society.

Figure 67 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting the image of the Queen Mother of the West

Source: Provided by a personal collector(2024.04)

Common religious images in Han Dynasty relief stone include mythological figures, gods and religious rituals, etc., showing people's belief and worship of supernatural powers at that time. The legend of Queen Mother of the West (Figure 67) can be traced back to the Yin and Shang Dynasty. She managed Kunlun Mountain, which was the westernmost part of China and the capital of the Emperor of Heaven. At the end of the Warring States Period and the beginning of the Western Han Dynasty, the half-human and half-beast Queen Mother of the West changed from a god to an immortal, and her image also changed to a graceful and elegant human king or queen mother. The Han Dynasty court hosted "sacrifices to Queen Mother of the West" many times, and it was "two thousand stone officials and long worshippers". In the middle of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the people paired Queen Mother of the West with King Father of the East, so the belief in Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East flourished. Queen Mother of the West possessed the "drug of immortality" that could make people immortal and live in heaven forever. This was consistent with the idea of the Han people praying to ascend to heaven and become immortals and should also be the main reason for the prevalence of the belief in Queen Mother of the West in the Han Dynasty.

There are also mythological figures that often appear on the stone reliefs, such as Fuxi, Nuwa, and Huangdi, which not only symbolize holiness and power, but also express people's understanding of the origin of the universe, the mystery of life, and natural phenomena. The images of Fuxi and Nuwa are common in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. They are depicted as snake bodies and human heads, symbolizing the creation of the world and the ancestors of mankind. This image not only reflects the Han people's reverence for their ancestors, but also reflects their awe of the mysterious power of nature.

Figure 68 Fuxi
Source: Provided by a personal collector(2024.04)

Figure 69 Nüwa
Source: Provided by a personal collector(2024.04)

In the relief stone, Fuxi and Nuwa are depicted as snake bodies with human heads (Figures 68 and 69), which is a typical depiction of this pair of mythological figures in the Han Dynasty. Fuxi is on the right, wearing a crown, symbolizing researcherity and holiness, and holding a rule, symbolizing the power of creation and governance. Nuwa is on the left, holding a round object, representing the ability to create and repair. The images of these two mythological figures not only show their sacred functions, but also reflect their important status in Han Dynasty culture.

The images of Fuxi and Nuwa frequently appear in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, reflecting the people's worship of them and their belief in their myths at that time. Fuxi is the ancestor who invented the Eight Trigrams, established the marriage system and taught humans to use fire, while Nuwa is regarded as the goddess who

created humans and repaired the sky. Their stories not only explain the origin of the universe and humans, but also convey the Han people's admiration for order, harmony and creativity (Zhao Yaoshuang, 2003, p15-17).

The carefully juxtaposed images of Fuxi and Nuwa on the stone not only symbolize harmony between men and women but are also a visual representation of an ideal balance that was considered key to social stability. The concept of harmony was central to religious ritual and social etiquette during the Han Dynasty. The harmonious relationship between men and women, heaven and earth, was seen as a reflection of the natural order, which, if maintained, would ensure prosperity and peace.

In the context of religious ritual, this harmony was not just a theoretical concept, but was manifested in rituals designed to align human behavior with cosmic principles. Rituals often included complex rituals to reinforce the roles of men and women in society, emphasizing the importance of balance and complementarity. Similarly, Han social etiquette was deeply influenced by these ideas, with strict codes of conduct regulating interactions between individuals to reflect and maintain this cosmic harmony.

Figure 70 A white tiger and two exotic animals depicted
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (August 2023)

The stone relief is therefore more than just a work of art; it is a cultural relic that embodies the Han worldview. It reflects the profound connection between religion, social order, and the belief in a harmonious and balanced universe. Through its depiction of Fuxi and Nuwa, the stone not only celebrates these mythical figures, but also conveys enduring values that were integral to Han society.

In addition to mythological figures, Han Dynasty stone reliefs often depict various exotic beasts, such as the White Tiger (Figure 70), Black Tortoise (Figure 71) , Vermillion Bird (Figure 72), Azure Dragon (Figure 73), and other four gods. These images not only have decorative functions, but also reflect the Han people's worship of cosmic order and mysterious power.

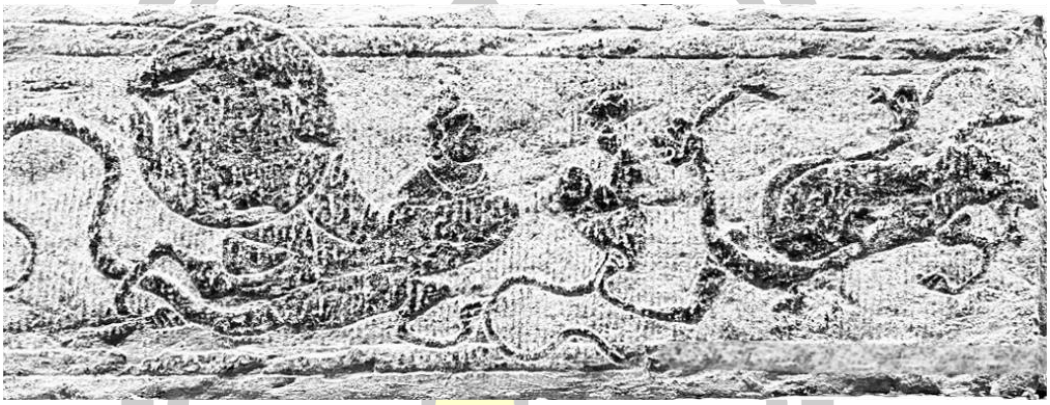

Figure 71 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting Xuanwu (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 72 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a human figure and the Vermilion Bird (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 73 Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a blue dragon and constellations (rubbing)

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The Han people viewed death as life, believing that the soul was immortal after death and could enter the paradise. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty often depicted the tomb owner's ascension to heaven, as well as the gods, humans and animals that provided guidance for the tomb owner's ascension. These images reflect the Han people's imagination and pursuit of the afterlife.

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Figure 74 Huangdi ascending to heaven (rubbing) Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)	Figure 75 Yan Emperor ascending to heaven (rubbing) Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

From Figure 74, we can see a three-legged sun disk carved on the top, and next to it is the scene of Huangdi ascending to heaven. Huangdi is carved with a bear head and a human body, and in the middle is a flying horse named "Fei Huang". According to legend, it has a dragon-winged horse body and Huangdi rode it to heaven. The idiom "Fei Huang Teng Da" also originated from this. There is also a divine elephant carved below.

From Figure 75 we can see the moon, the jade rabbit and the toad. Next to them is the picture of Yan Emperor leading the phoenix to heaven. Yan Emperor wears a bamboo hat, a straw raincoat and holds a wooden hoe. At the bottom is engraved a divine cow holding a Ganoderma lucidum, symbolizing that Yan Emperor is the god of medicine.

Figure 76 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a winged immortal.
Image source https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id

In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, the image of the winged man more directly shows the imagination and pursuit of the Han people for the immortals (Figure 76). The winged man with feathers or wings flying or playing with gods and beasts in the stone reliefs is undoubtedly a concrete expression of the Han people's yearning and longing for "transcendence and ascending to the immortal world".

Analysis and summary

Through the analysis of the communication value in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, we can see that the Han Dynasty society attached great importance to etiquette norms, family harmony and religious beliefs. These values have been preserved and passed on through the artistic expression of stone reliefs, and still have a profound impact on contemporary society. In modern society, inheriting and carrying forward these cultural values will not only help enhance social cohesion, but also provide useful inspiration and reference for building a harmonious society.

The communication value in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs shows the cultural heritage of the society at that time and the complexity of interpersonal relationships and has been preserved in the form of images. These images not only record the lifestyle of the Han people, but also have a profound impact on the inheritance and development of Chinese culture, providing valuable cultural heritage for contemporary society. Today, re-examining these ancient cultural values is of great significance for understanding the deep structure of Chinese culture and promoting cultural innovation and inheritance.

3.4 “Spiritual and Cultural Value” in Han Dynasty Stone Picture Art

As a treasure of Han Dynasty culture, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is not only admirable for its unique artistic style and exquisite craftsmanship, but also makes people think deeply for its profound spiritual and cultural value. These stone reliefs are not just cold stones, they are a vivid record of social life in the Han Dynasty and a direct reflection of the spiritual world of the Han people. The following is an in-depth discussion of the "spiritual and cultural value" of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty from four aspects: national spirit, governance philosophy, traditional virtues, and way of thinking.

3.4.1 National Spirit

(1) The national spirit of self-improvement

As decorative stone carvings unique to Han Dynasty tomb buildings, Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only have great artistic achievements, but also contain rich Han Dynasty cultural thoughts and national spirit.

Hunting was not only an important way for the Han people to show their bravery and wisdom, but also reflected the national spirit of the Han Dynasty, which advocated bravery and self-improvement.

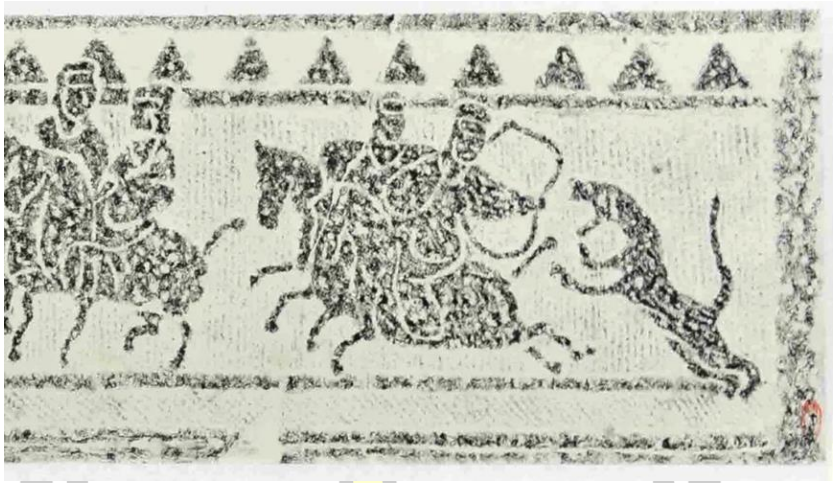

Figure 77 Scene showing a convoy encountering a tiger (rubbing)
Source: https://www.tzhhxsg.com/index.php?c=content&a=show&id=357

The stone relief in Figure 77 depicts a hunting scene in which warriors draw bows and fight wild beasts. The picture is intense and fierce, and the warriors are brave and courageous, showing the Han people's vigorous, capable and self-reliant spirit.

People in the Han Dynasty believed that they could achieve immortality through practice and faith. This persistent pursuit of life and the spirit of transcendence of death are vividly reflected in the stone reliefs.

Figure 78 The Queen Mother of the West traveling with her chariot and horses
Source: https://www.tzhhxsg.com/index.php?c=content&a=show&id=252

(2) Optimism towards death

In Han Dynasty culture, immortality and ascension to heaven became people's beautiful wishes. Scenes of immortals and ascension often appeared in stone reliefs, such as the appearance of mythological figures such as the Queen Mother of the West (Figure 78), Fuxi, and Nuwa, symbolizing people's yearning for transcending death and pursuing immortality. These mythological images not only provide spiritual sustenance in real life, but also show people's indifferent attitude towards death and optimistic belief in the pursuit of immortality.

The burial culture of the Han Dynasty emphasized "treating the dead as if they were alive" (“treating the dead as if they were alive" is a funeral concept and cultural tradition in ancient China, which originated from Confucianism, especially mentioned in the Book of Rites. The literal meaning of this concept is "treating the dead as if they were alive", and it contains a deep concept of filial piety and respect for ancestors) . The design and decoration of the tombs seemed to provide another "home" for the dead. The vivid scenes of family banquets, hunting, music and dance carved on the stone reliefs reflect people's meticulous arrangements for life after death and their optimistic attitude towards death. Through this design, the people of the Han Dynasty hoped that the dead could continue to enjoy the happy life before they died. This attitude towards death was undoubtedly optimistic and open-minded.

In the cultural atmosphere of the Han Dynasty, death was not seen as a horrible or sad event, but a natural stage of life. The figures and scenes in the stone reliefs often show a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere, showing the indifference and acceptance of death by the Han people. This attitude shows that they believed that death was not the end, but the beginning of entering another better world.

In general, the Han people showed their open-minded attitude and optimism towards death through stone reliefs and other forms. This spirit made death no longer a source of fear, but a natural transition to another world. This optimistic attitude deeply

influenced the culture and art of the Han Dynasty, and also showed the positive attitude of people at that time towards life and the world.

(3) Patriotism

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty often depict frontier wars to maintain national unity and resist foreign invasions, which reflects the strong national defense awareness of the society at that time. Defending the country and the people was the core content of patriotism in the Han Dynasty, and the people regarded military force as an important means to maintain national security and sovereignty.

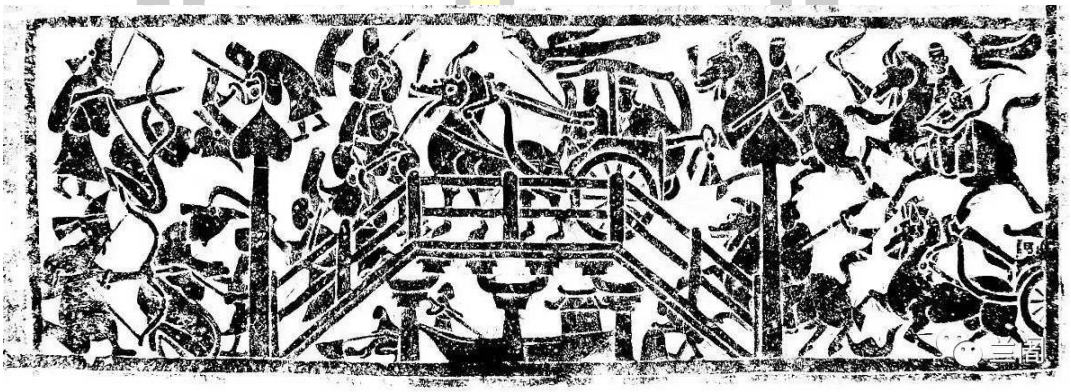

Figure 79 Depicting a scene of frontier war
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 79 shows the soldiers working together and marching forward in the same battle scene, reflecting the importance that Han society attached to collective strength and national honor. At that time, it was the duty of every citizen to defend the country and protect their homeland. Through the portrayal of these characters, the patriotism of the Han Dynasty was reflected in the sense of responsibility and mission of individuals fighting for the collective and the country.

3.4.2 Governing Philosophy

As an important cultural heritage of the Han Dynasty, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty vividly depict the rules and regulations, local customs and folk customs, and mythological stories of the Han Dynasty society. They are important physical materials

for studying the governing philosophy of the Han Dynasty. In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, the governing philosophy of the time is reflected in the following aspects:

(1) Governing the world with filial piety

The images of old people are often seen in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, especially those holding "jiu staffs" (Figures 79 and 80) . This represents the system of respecting the elderly in the Han Dynasty. According to the "Royal Staff Edict Book", Emperor Xuan of the Han Dynasty implemented the "Royal Staff for the Elderly" system, which was a ritual system in the Han Dynasty, symbolizing respect for the elderly.

Specifically, it refers to the fact that when the elders are over 70 or 80 years old, the emperor will give them a royal scepter, which symbolizes researcherity and dignity. The significance of this ritual is to express the country's respect and care for the elderly, and also to encourage members of society to be filial to their elders and respect the elderly.

This ritual not only reflects the value of "respecting the elderly" in traditional Chinese society, but also embodies the concept of governing the country with filial piety. In this cultural context, bestowing the king with a staff became a symbol of social status and respect, further promoting the promotion of filial piety and the maintenance of social order.

Figure 80 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting an old man with a cane
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

Figure 81 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a man living with a cane
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

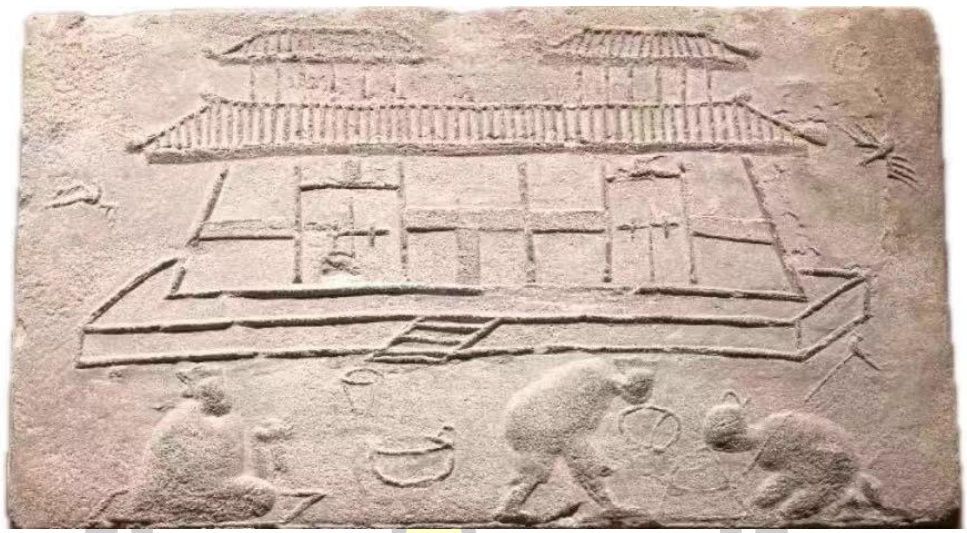

Figure 82 A relief stone depicting a visit to an old man
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

In the Han Dynasty, officials were selected based on their filial piety and integrity. This system was also reflected in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. For example, the theme reliefs such as "Paying Homage" (Figure 82) often showed respect for elders and officials and scenes of paying homage, highlighting the important position of filial piety and morality in society.

Figure 83 Stone relief depicting Dong Yong's filial piety (rubbing)
Source: h ttps://history.sohu.com/a/465729519_160261(2024.04)

In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the story of Dong Yong is delicately carved (Figure 83. In this portrait, there is a line of words carved next to Dong Yong: "Dong

Yong, a man from Qiancheng." This short sentence not only points out Dong Yong's identity and origin, but also provides viewers with a hint of historical background.

It is worth noting that in the upper right corner of Dong Yong in the painting, a fairy with wings is depicted. Obviously, this is the Weaver Girl who married Dong Yong in the folk legend. When the Han Dynasty painter created this portrait, he combined the different plots of the story to form a complete narrative picture. This artistic technique makes the picture narrative and coherent. It is not just a depiction of a single scene but shows the whole picture of the story through the integration of different plots.

The story of Dong Yong's filial piety in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is not just a simple reproduction of a historical figure, but also a clever combination of the character's filial piety and mythological stories through artistic techniques, conveying the important ethical value of filial piety. This form of artistic expression has both historical authenticity and the romantic color of the legend, making Dong Yong's story more vivid and deeply rooted in people's hearts.

Figure 84 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a visitation
Source: Photographed by researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (August 2023)

(2) Legal Concept

A large number of legal images are depicted in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, such as the image of Xiezhi , which is a symbolic representation of traditional Chinese

legal culture in images, symbolizing the ability to distinguish right from wrong and judge straight and crooked. These images reflect the popularization of the legal system in the Han Dynasty and the spread of social legal concepts (Zhao Yaoshuang, 2003, p.15-17).

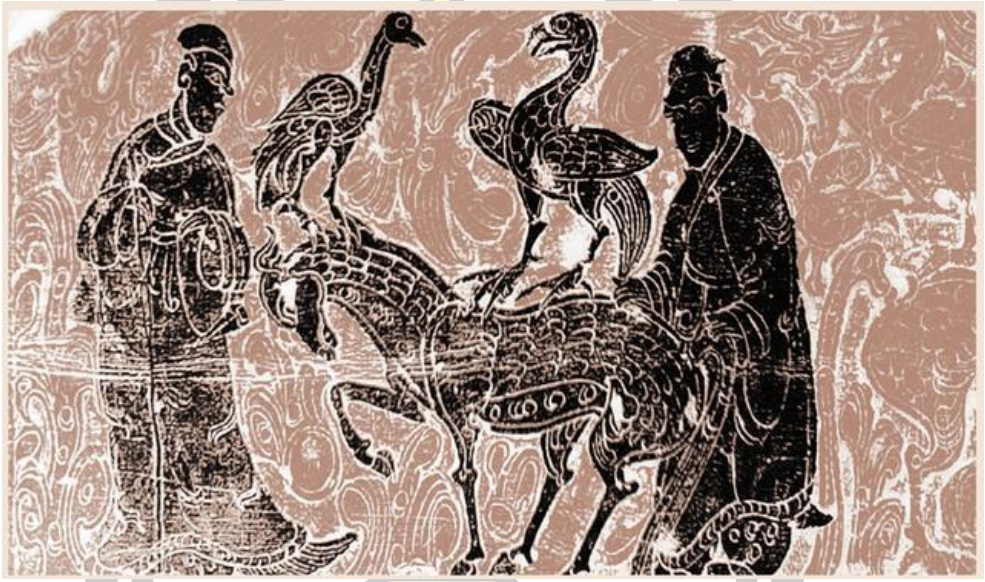

Figure 85 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting Gao Yao administering justice (rubbing)

Source: https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s? (2024.04)

The Xiezhi in the stone relief in Figure 85 is butting a person with its thorns. Behind it is Gao Yao, who is revered as the god of hell.

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty also show the types, systems and development of punishments in the Han Dynasty, such as flogging, scenes of criminal investigation, etc. These images are consistent with the written records of Han Dynasty prison bricks, Han Dynasty bamboo slips, etc., reflecting the universal characteristics of the legal concept of the Han Dynasty. This concept can be clearly shown in the stone relief of the picture of the thief returning home in glory (Figure 85).

Figure 86 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a man who had captured a thief and returned in triumph(1)

Source: Photographed by researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (2024.02)

"Pictures of catching thieves and returning home in glory"(Figure 86and Figure 87) is a common theme in ancient Chinese art works, mainly depicting scenes of catching thieves and bandits, as well as scenes of officials or generals who have made great contributions returning home in glory. They often appear in the form of paintings or sculptures, conveying the maintenance of social order, the promotion of justice, and the praise of brave and loyal heroes.

Figure 87 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a man who had captured a thief and returned in triumph(2)

Source: Photographed by researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (2024.02)

3.4.3 Traditional virtues

As a unique art form of the Han Dynasty, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty vividly record the social life and cultural concepts of the time, many of which reflect traditional virtues. The following are some specific examples:

(1) Filial piety

Filial piety is one of the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, and it is fully reflected in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. For example, there are a large number of images reflecting stories of filial piety in the stone reliefs of Wu's Temple in Jiaxiang, Shandong, such as the image of "Emperor Shun" and Shun's "Governing the Country", "Min Ziqian Losing the Whip " (Figure 88), "Lao Laizi Entertaining His Parents ", "Han Boyu Being Flogged and Injured by His Parents", " Xing Qu Feeding His Father", "Xiao Sun Yuan Gu" and other filial piety stories. These images promote the Confucian concept of filial piety through vivid storylines, teach people to respect and take care of

their parents, and embody the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation of respecting the elderly and loving the young.

Figure 88 Depicting the historical story of Min Ziqian losing his club
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Yulin Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (2024.02)

Figure 89 Depicting the story of Lao Laizi entertaining his parents
Source: https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/sculpture/229711..htm|(2024.04)

Lao Laizi entertains his parents (Figure 89) is one of the Twenty-Four Filial Piety Stories. It is said that Lao Laizi was originally a hermit in the Chu State during the Spring and Autumn Period. Later, it was said that he was filial to his parents . He was over 70 years old, but he still wore colorful clothes and pretended to be a bird beside his parents to make them happy. The earliest existing image of Lao Laizi is a stone chamber portrait of Wuliang Shrine in Jiaxiang, Shandong Province in the late Eastern Han Dynasty. There are many such images found in tombs in northern China during the Song and Jin Dynasties. Most of them show Lao Laizi holding a rattle. Later, there are also depictions of Lao Laizi throwing a bucket of water on the ground, which is intended to show that Lao Laizi pretended to be an innocent child in order to make his parents feel that they were not old yet. The story of Lao Laizi 's filial piety later changed. Later generations said that he took water from the hall, deliberately fell down, and spilled the water on the ground, pretending to be a crying child.

(2) loyalty and righteousness.

There are also some images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs that reflect loyalty and righteousness. For example, stories about assassins such as Yu Rang assassinating Zhao Xiangzi show the image of loyal ministers who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the benefit of the country or the favor of the monarch. These images are not only a reproduction of historical events, but also a celebration of the traditional virtues of loyalty and righteousness.

Figure 90 Depicting the historical story of Yu Rang assassinating Zhao Xiangzi (rubbing)

Source: http://sanyamuseum.com/a/3/2022/0520/934.html（2024.03）

Figure 90 tells the story of Yu Rang assassinating Zhao Xiangzi, which happened in the 16th year of King Ding of Zhou. Zhao Xiangzi was the great-grandson of Zhao Wu. Yu Rang once served the powerful minister Zhi Bo in Jin State, and Zhi Bo treated Yu Rang with great respect. Later, Zhi Bo was eliminated by Zhao Xiangzi , and Yu Rang was very sad and angry about this. He thought that he should die for his confidant, and only by assassinating Zhao Xiangzi could he have a clear conscience. After Yu Rang's first assassination failed, Zhao Xiangzi appreciated his loyalty and thought that "he is a righteous man, I should avoid him. Moreover, Zhi Bo has died without descendants, and his ministers still want to avenge him. Such a person is really a wise man in the world." So, Zhao Xiangzi released Yu Rang.

To continue his revenge, Yu Rang painted himself with lacquer, disguised himself as a ghost, and swallowed charcoal to make himself mute. He tried to assassinate again but failed. So, he asked Zhao Xiangzi to take off his clothes so that he could assassinate him in order to repay Zhi Bo's kindness. Zhao Xiangzi agreed to his request and sent someone to bring clothes to Yu Rang, so that he could fulfill his wish.

This story shows Yu Rang's loyalty and also highlights Zhao Xiangzi's wisdom and kindness. Sima Qian praised Zhao Xiangzi through Yu Rang's words: "I have heard that the lord does not cover up the virtues of others... There is no one in the world who does not praise the lord's wisdom."

(3) Concept of ritual system

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs also showcase the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation through a series of images that reflect the concept of ritual. For example, pictures of funeral ceremonies and banquets emphasize the importance of ritual in social life by showing strict etiquette norms and orderly social order. These images are not only a true record of social life at that time, but also a vivid interpretation of Confucian ritual thought.

Figure 91 A Han Dynasty stone relief depicting a welcoming scene
Source: Photographed by the researcher in Xuzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum in April 2024

Figure 91 is divided into two sections. The lower section shows a welcoming scene. In front of the tall Zimuque, the host is bowing to the guest to express his welcome. On his right, there are light carriages and carts, suggesting the arrival of the guests. The upper section depicts two halls with high curtains hanging inside and various wine

utensils placed on the tables. The male and female guests are happily chatting in the two halls, just as the sentence "It is a great pleasure to have friends coming from afar!" expresses. The whole picture vividly reflects the real situation of the feudal aristocracy in the Han Dynasty in terms of courtesy and interpersonal relations.

3.4.4 Thinking style

As an outstanding representative of Han Dynasty art, Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly display the social life, religious beliefs and aesthetic concepts of the time, and also profoundly reflect the ancient people's way of thinking. The following are examples of Han Dynasty stone reliefs that respectively reflect the overall, dialectical and experiential thinking styles:

(1) Holistic thinking

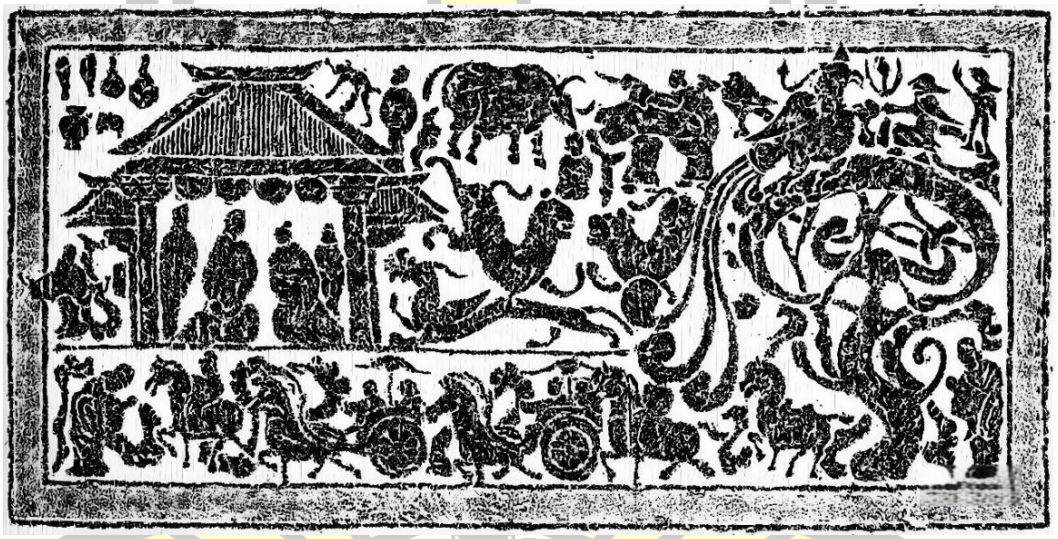

Figure 92 Nuwa celebrating birthday (rubbing)
Source: Provided by a personal collector(2024.04)

In this Han Dynasty stone relief (Figure 92), the overall thinking mode is mainly demonstrated in the following aspects: the whole picture is balanced in the layout of up, down, left and right, and each part echoes each other. The building on the left, the mythical beast in the center, the birds and beasts on the right and the chariot and horse scene together form a harmonious whole, showing that the painter attaches great importance to the overall structure when designing. Although the image contains a

variety of elements such as buildings, people, animals, chariots and horses, they maintain a coordinated proportion and position as a whole, and no part appears abrupt. This arrangement reflects the overall harmony and balance that the Han people pursued in artistic creation. The whole picture presents a complete narrative, and the people on the left, the buildings and the mythical beasts on the right form a certain story situation. This overall narrative sense shows that ancient artists pay more attention to the integrity of the content when expressing, rather than focusing only on the independent presentation of individual scenes.

From these aspects, we can see that the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only focus on the expression of individual elements, but also emphasize the harmonious beauty of the overall layout. This holistic concept profoundly reflects the philosophical and cultural thinking of ancient China.

(2) Dialectical thinking

Figure 93 Depicting the historical story of Jing Ke assassinating the King of Qin

Source: Provided by a personal collector（2004.03）

From Figure 93, we can see that Jing Ke is on the left and the King of Qin is on the right. When Jing Ke stabbed the King of Qin, the first blow cut off the King of Qin's sleeve, but the sleeve has not fallen in the portrait. The second blow hit the pillar, but the sword tassel has not fallen in the portrait. Jing Ke was furious, and the King of Qin

ran around the pillar. The King of Qin raised his left hand above his head, showing the moment when he wanted to draw the sword but failed. Although Han paintings are all flat and static pictures, they show us the most thrilling moments of the event. All the characters in the portrait are frozen in the rhythm of flying, which is a very exaggerated artistic expression.In this portrait stone, the images of Jing Ke, the King of Qin and his followers are cleverly arranged together, forming a strong contrast and conflict. In the picture, Jing Ke's bravery forms a sharp contrast with the King of Qin's fear and the panic of his followers, reflecting the dialectical relationship between life and death, courage and cowardice.

This portrait stone conveys the ancients' profound understanding and grasp of the dialectical relationship of things through the expression of contrast and conflict. The characters and plots in the picture are not only narrative, but also contain rich symbolic meanings and philosophical thinking, reflecting the dialectical way of thinking of the ancients.

When appreciating this portrait stone, the viewer is easily infected by the joyful and peaceful atmosphere in the picture. The concentration of the musicians, the agility of the dancers and the thrilling performances of the acrobats together create a vivid scene, making the viewer feel as if they are in that era full of vitality and creativity. This emotional resonance is a manifestation of Shang's way of thinking.

The spiritual and cultural values in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty mainly cover four aspects: national spirit, governance philosophy, traditional virtues and ways of thinking. These aspects interact with each other and constitute the core spiritual and cultural system of the Han Dynasty society. By analyzing these relationships, we can better understand the deep structure of the social culture of the Han Dynasty and draw inspiration from it for contemporary society.

(2) Ecological concept of harmony between man and nature

The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty reflect the Han people's understanding and attitude towards nature, including the observation and understanding of nature, the use

and protection of natural resources, etc. Taoism believes that nature has its own laws of operation, and humans should follow nature. This idea advocates the harmonious coexistence of man and nature and emphasizes the self-regulation and self-improvement of nature. In the Taoist classic "Tao Te Ching", Lao Tzu proposed "Man follows the earth, the earth follows the sky, the sky follows the Tao, and the Tao follows nature", expressing the Taoist philosophy of pursuing harmonious coexistence with nature, emphasizing that humans should follow the natural laws of heaven and earth, follow the laws of nature, and achieve the ideal state of "ruling by doing nothing". It advocates that humans should respect nature, follow the nature of all things in heaven and earth, and should not violate or interfere with the operation of nature, reflecting respect and awe for nature.

Figure 94 A picture showing the harmonious coexistence of man and nature (rubbing)

Source: Provided by a personal collector(2024.04)

This Han Dynasty stone relief (Fig. 94) shows the concept of harmony between man and nature. This concept can be interpreted by carefully observing the details in the picture.

The painting depicts scenes of natural landscapes and human activities, such as rivers, trees, and boats. In this painting, natural elements such as trees and rivers are seamlessly integrated with scenes of human activities, showing human respect and compliance with the natural environment. People sail in the river, rest under the trees, and work on the riverbank. These activities coexist harmoniously with the natural environment, showing the harmonious interaction between man and nature in ancient society.

Although the people in the picture are engaged in production and life activities, these activities do not destroy the tranquility and beauty of nature but follow the rhythm of nature. This restrained attitude reflects the ancient people's respect and dependence on nature, and the concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature is vividly expressed in the painting. Human activities have not caused damage to the natural environment, reflecting the trust and compliance with the self-regulation ability of nature.

The activities in the picture, such as boating and fishing, show the scenes of human beings using natural resources. These activities not only reflect the dependence of human beings on the natural environment for survival, but also show the adaptation and cooperation of human beings in nature. This reciprocal relationship reflects an ancient ecological wisdom, that is, while using natural resources, it does not destroy their balance, and embodies the idea of "harmony between man and nature".

This Han Dynasty stone relief fully expresses the concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In ancient times, man and nature were regarded as an organic whole. People respected and followed nature and found the rhythm and balance of life in nature. This harmonious concept not only shows the ancient people's love and dependence on nature, but also conveys a profound understanding of environmental protection and ecological balance. This picture vividly shows how the ancients achieved symbiosis and prosperity with nature through harmonious coexistence.

Although Confucianism attaches great importance to human ethics and social order, it also has a profound understanding of nature. Taoism puts forward the idea of "harmony between man and nature", believing that heaven, earth and man are a whole, and man and nature should coexist harmoniously. Confucianism emphasizes maintaining a harmonious relationship between man and nature through etiquette and moral norms. The Confucian classic "The Doctrine of the Mean" mentions that "all things grow together without harming each other, and all ways run parallel without contradicting each other ", expressing the ideal of harmonious coexistence of all things in nature. This idea had a profound impact on the ecological ethics and view of nature in Han Dynasty society.

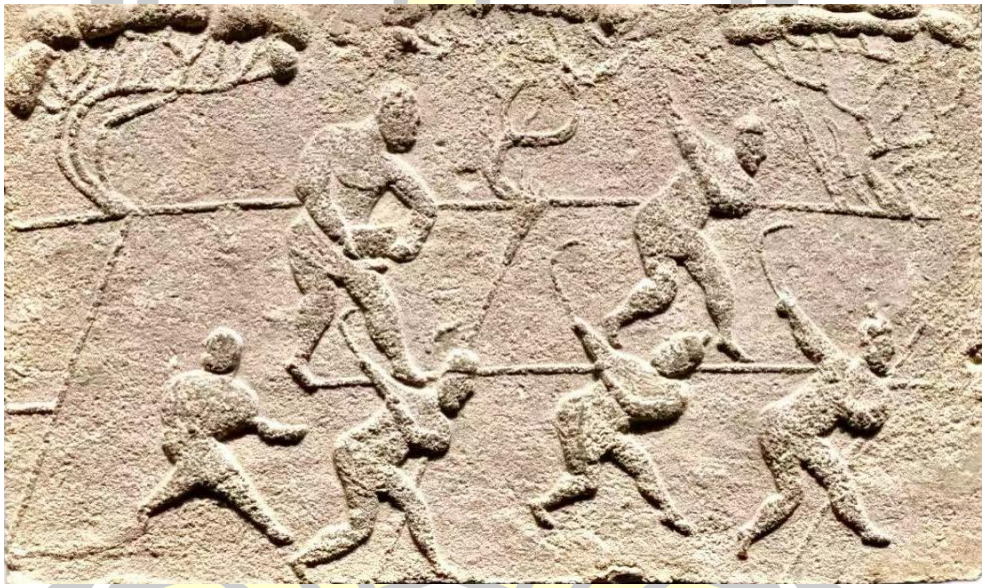

Figure 95 Han Dynasty stone relief depicting farm production (rubbing)
Source: Photographed by researcher at Sichuan Museum (2024.04)

There are many other Han Dynasty stone reliefs that demonstrate the Han people's pursuit of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. For example, Figure 95 shows the farming and life scenes of the Han people, reflecting the Han people's dependence on the natural environment and their yearning for pastoral life.

Table 9 Analysis of the classification, expression and deep level meaning of the artistic and cultural value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Cultural Value Classification	Manifestation	Deeper meaning
Material cultural value	Describe Han Dynasty architecture (such as palaces, pavilions, courtyards, etc.) - Show Han Dynasty clothing, food, transportation and production activities	It reflects the economic development of Han Dynasty society and the people's pursuit of quality of life, artistic aesthetics and craftsmanship.
communication value	Describe scenes of daily life, social interactions, festive weddings , banquets, clan gatherings, etc.	Delivering family values, collective consciousness and social harmony, expressing courtesy and interpersonal relationships through interactive scenes, emphasizing the relationship between family, community and country
Spiritual and cultural value	Horseback hunting Frontier War Stories about traditional virtues such as fishing and bird-shooting, filial piety, and loyalty	It conveys the Han people's exploration and transcendence of the meaning of life. It emphasizes the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans, nature and society. It reflects a way of thinking

		centered on the whole, dialectics and understanding.

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

Analysis and summary

This section summarizes the traditional virtues reflected in the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, especially the expression of filial piety, loyalty and righteousness, and the concept of ritual. Through image records, Han Dynasty stone reliefs show the values of filial piety to parents, loyalty to the country and monarch, and following etiquette. The content of Han Dynasty stone relief art not only reflects the ethics of Han Dynasty society, but also expresses the ancients' holistic and dialectical way of thinking and the concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Finally, by analyzing the traditional virtues and ways of thinking in Han Dynasty stone relief art, the researcher proposes the enlightenment of these cultural values to contemporary society in terms of spirit, governance and ethical construction.

3.5 The value transformation of the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art in contemporary Chinese society

The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing in November 2012, was a very important conference held at the decisive stage of my country's comprehensive building of a moderately prosperous society. The important judgment made was that starting from the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, socialism with Chinese characteristics entered a new era (Han Qingxiang & Zhang Jian, 2023, p.5-14). China, which has entered a new era, emphasizes the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture in the context of the new era of contemporary Chinese socialism. This is not only a manifestation of cultural confidence, but also an inevitable requirement for cultural development. As a treasure of China's excellent traditional culture, the material

culture, spiritual culture and communication culture values contained in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty not only provide us with valuable materials for studying the society of the Han Dynasty, but also provide profound resources and inspiration for the cultural construction of the new era. This chapter will analyze the value transformation of the stone relief art culture of the Han Dynasty in the new era of contemporary Chinese socialism through two aspects of cultural value relations: one is the object of cultural needs - the cultural value expressed by the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty; the other is the subject of cultural needs - the discovery, possession and transformation of these cultural values by contemporary society, to analyze the value transformation of the stone relief art culture of the Han Dynasty in the new era of contemporary Chinese socialism.

3.5.1 The transformation of the material cultural value

(1) Expression of architectural culture

The architectural depictions in Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only show the grandeur and exquisiteness of Han Dynasty architecture, but also reflect the craftsmanship and social structure of the time. In the context of the new era, Han Dynasty architectural culture provides rich reference materials for contemporary urban planning and architectural design. Through the innovative transformation of Han Dynasty architectural style, contemporary architectural design can achieve an organic combination of tradition and modernity and enhance the cultural heritage and international influence of the city.

(2) Display of clothing culture

The detailed depiction of the costumes of the characters in Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflects the hierarchy and aesthetic concepts of Han Dynasty society. In the new socialist era, Han Dynasty clothing culture provides valuable inspiration for contemporary clothing design and cultural and creative industries. Through the creative transformation of Han Dynasty costumes, the contemporary fashion industry can showcase the unique Chinese style in the context of globalization and enhance cultural

soft power.

(3) Description of food culture

The rich food scenes in Han Dynasty stone reliefs provide us with an important perspective to understand the food culture of the Han Dynasty. These scenes not only show the eating habits of the Han people, but also reflect the social outlook and cultural values of the time. In contemporary society, food culture is an important part of the cultural and creative industry. Through the innovative transformation of Han Dynasty food culture, the contemporary catering industry can preserve the essence of traditional food while combining it with modern needs to promote Chinese food culture to the world.

3.5.2 The transformation of the cultural value of communication

(1) Expression of social communication

The social communication scenes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs show the etiquette norms and interpersonal relationships of the Han Dynasty society. These scenes not only reflect the communication culture of the society at that time, but also provide us with important information for understanding the social structure of the Han Dynasty. In the context of the new era, the social communication culture of the Han Dynasty has important reference significance for the cultural construction of contemporary society. Through innovative transformation, it can promote interpersonal communication and community construction in modern society and enhance social cohesion.

(2) Display of folk customs and festival culture

The folk customs and festival scenes depicted in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs show the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the Han Dynasty society. These images provide us with important information for understanding the folk culture of the Han Dynasty. In the context of the new era, the folk customs and festival culture of the Han Dynasty have important implications for contemporary cultural construction. Through innovative transformation, we can enrich the cultural life of modern society and

enhance cultural identity and social harmony.

(3) Religious beliefs and ritual culture

The religious beliefs and ritual scenes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the religious culture and spiritual world of Han Dynasty society. These images provide us with important information for understanding the belief system of Han Dynasty society. In the context of the new era, the religious belief culture of the Han Dynasty has important reference significance for the cultural construction of contemporary society. Through innovative transformation, we can promote the spiritual civilization construction of modern society and enhance the cultural heritage and spiritual strength of society.

3.5.3 The transformation of the spiritual and cultural value

(1) Expression of social communication

The social communication scenes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs show the etiquette norms and interpersonal relationships of the Han Dynasty society. These scenes not only reflect the communication culture of the society at that time, but also provide us with important information for understanding the social structure of the Han Dynasty. In the context of the new era, the social communication culture of the Han Dynasty has important reference significance for the cultural construction of contemporary society. Through innovative transformation, it can promote interpersonal communication and community construction in modern society and enhance social cohesion.

(2) Display of folk customs and festival culture

The folk customs and festival scenes depicted in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs show the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the Han Dynasty society. These images provide us with important information for understanding the folk culture of the Han Dynasty. In the context of the new era, the folk customs and festival culture of the Han Dynasty have important implications for contemporary cultural construction. Through innovative transformation, we can enrich the cultural life of modern society and

enhance cultural identity and social harmony.

(3) Religious beliefs and ritual culture

The religious beliefs and ritual scenes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect the religious culture and spiritual world of Han Dynasty society. These images provide us with important information for understanding the belief system of Han Dynasty society. In the context of the new era, the religious belief culture of the Han Dynasty has important reference significance for the cultural construction of contemporary society. Through innovative transformation, we can promote the spiritual civilization construction of modern society and enhance the cultural heritage and spiritual strength of society.

Analysis and summary

This section discusses the spiritual and cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art and its transformation in contemporary society. Through the display of scenes such as social interaction, folk festivals, and religious beliefs, Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only reflect the social structure and belief system of the time, but also provide reference significance for the cultural construction of modern society. Through innovative transformation, the cultural elements in Han Dynasty stone reliefs can promote interpersonal communication, enrich cultural life, and enhance spiritual civilization and cultural identity in modern society.

Summary

First, the cultural value of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is deeply explored through the three levels of material culture, spiritual culture and communication culture. In terms of material culture, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty show the economic development, technological level and lifestyle of the Han Dynasty society through the depiction of architecture, clothing, food, transportation, etc., reflecting the pursuit of quality of life and artistic aesthetics in the Han Dynasty. In terms of spiritual culture, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty embody the deep cultural values such as national spirit, governance philosophy and traditional virtues, and show the importance of

national unity, national pride and moral norms in the Han Dynasty. In terms of communication culture, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty show the etiquette norms, interpersonal relationships and spiritual world of the society at that time by depicting social activities, folk customs and religious beliefs.

Secondly, the value transformation of these cultural values in contemporary Chinese society is explored. In the context of the new era, the material culture of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty provides rich inspiration and resources for modern urban planning, architectural design, clothing industry and food culture. And its spiritual and cultural values, such as national spirit and governance philosophy, provide important references for the cultural construction and governance model of modern society. In addition, the cultural value of communication in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs can promote social activities, community construction and spiritual civilization development in contemporary society through innovative transformation. It can promote the inheritance and development of China's excellent traditional culture in the context of the new era, enhance cultural confidence, and provide strong cultural support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. At the same time, it also paves the way for the writing of subsequent chapters.

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CHAPTER IV

The Aesthetics of Han Dynasty Stone relief Art

Introduction

This chapter mainly studies the aesthetic characteristics of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. First, the concept and definition of aesthetics are discussed, and the development process of traditional Chinese aesthetics, including ancient Chinese aesthetics and modern aesthetics, as well as the hierarchical structure of works of art are traced. Secondly, the materials and carving techniques of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty are deeply analyzed, the stone selection, tool use and production process are discussed, and the influence of carving techniques on artistic expression is revealed. In addition, this chapter also analyzes in detail the artistic form beauty of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, including composition, lines and shapes, showing the craftsmen's superb skills and unique creativity on stone. Finally, the content beauty and aesthetic concepts in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty are analyzed, and the aesthetic study of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is completed. Through the analysis of the characteristics of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, the aesthetic style of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is summarized. Through these analyses, the profound cultural connotation and unique aesthetic value of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty are revealed, laying the foundation for the discussion of subsequent chapters.

4.1 Aesthetics Overview

4.1.1 The Formation of Traditional Chinese Aesthetics

The concept of "aesthetics" was introduced to China from the West in modern times. However, we cannot say that there was no aesthetics in China before modern times. Aesthetic awareness has long existed in Chinese history. For example, pottery

from the Neolithic Age in China clearly reflects the aesthetic awareness of humans at that time.

The Pre-Qin period was the first golden age of the development of Chinese classical aesthetics. The aesthetics of Laozi, Confucius, Yi Zhuan, and Zhuangzi laid the foundation for the development of Chinese classical aesthetics.

The starting point of Chinese aesthetics is Laozi, who proposed concepts such as "Tao", "Qi" and "Xiang"(In Laozi's thought, "Tao" is the ultimate principle and fundamental law of the universe, "Qi" is the concrete manifestation of Tao and the driving force behind the creation of all things, and "Xiang" is the materialized form of Qi, representing the existence of everything in the world. Together, Tao, Qi, and Xiang form an organic whole, explaining the essence, generation, and transformation of the universe.), which had a profound impact on Chinese classical aesthetics and created the tradition of Taoist aesthetics. Confucius created Confucian aesthetics, emphasizing the role of aesthetics and art in social life and proposed propositions such as "poetry can inspire".

As a Confucian classic, Yi Zhuan puts forward the propositions of "everything is Yi" and "Yi is a symbol", which has influenced the development of Chinese aesthetics. Zhuangzi inherited and developed Laozi's Taoist aesthetics, put forward the realm of "wandering", and emphasized the freedom of spirit.

The Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties period was the second golden age of the development of Chinese aesthetics. Many important aesthetic categories were proposed, such as " Qi", "Miao" and "Shen" ("Qi" is the vital energy that animates life and the universe; "Miao" represents the subtle, mysterious nature of the Dao that transcends ordinary understanding; and "Shen" is the spiritual essence or consciousness that connects individuals to the divine and the cosmos. Together, these concepts form a foundational understanding of the Daoist view of life, nature, and spiritual practice.), which had a profound impact on later generations.

During the Tang and Song dynasties, Zen Buddhism also had a significant impact

on Chinese aesthetics, especially in the formation of artistic conception theory. The early Qing Dynasty was the third golden age of Chinese aesthetics, and Wang Fuzhi's aesthetic system centered on "imagery" became the summary and peak of Chinese classical aesthetics.

From Lao Tzu, Confucius, Zhuangzi to the Qing Dynasty, many thinkers have put forward a series of important aesthetic concepts and propositions. These ideas constitute the precious heritage of Chinese aesthetics and are an important resource for building a modern aesthetic system.

4.1.2 The formation of contemporary Chinese aesthetics

(1) Modern Chinese aesthetics

China entered the modern era starting with the Opium War in 1840. The most influential modern Chinese aestheticians were Liang Qichao, Wang Guowei, and Cai Yuanpei. Their common feature was that they were all enthusiastic about learning and introducing Western aesthetics (mainly German aesthetics) and tried to combine Western aesthetics with Chinese aesthetics.

The May Fourth Movement in 1919 It marks the entry of China into modern history. In the history of modern aesthetics, Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua are the most contributing and influential aestheticians. Their thoughts reflect the trend of the integration of Chinese and Western aesthetics. Zhu Guangqian's aesthetics is mainly based on the traditional "subject-object dichotomy" model, but when analyzing aesthetic activities, he broke through this model and tended to the concept of "harmony between man and nature". He proposed the "image" aesthetic thought, emphasizing the connotation of imagery given by aesthetic activities (Li Shitao, 2023, pp. 199-200).

Zhu Guangqian's research on Chinese and Western aesthetics is very in-depth. He has published many works and translated a large number of Western aesthetic classics, making great contributions to the discipline construction of Chinese aesthetics. Zong Baihua also advocated the integration of Chinese and Western aesthetics, believing that the future world culture should combine the advantages of the East and the West and

be composed of Chinese Scholars have made unique contributions.

(2) Contemporary Chinese Aesthetics

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the beginning of the contemporary era in Chinese history. The most prominent phenomenon in the development of contemporary Chinese aesthetics is the emergence of two aesthetic booms.

The first was from the 1950s to the 1960s, when a great discussion on the nature of beauty unfolded. This discussion enlivened the academic atmosphere, but the criticism of Zhu Guangqian and the total negation of Western aesthetics led to the disconnection of Chinese aesthetics from international trends.

The second aesthetic boom occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With the process of reform and opening up, people began to reflect on history, and a widespread "cultural fever" emerged. The aesthetic boom was only part of it. The topics covered in this discussion were broader and the research was more dispersed, including traditional aesthetics, Western aesthetics, and so on, aesthetic psychology, sociology and other fields. Although the "aesthetic fever" has gradually subsided, aesthetics still attracts attention (Zhao Xujie, 2022, p.175-178).

From the late 1980s to the early 21st century, progress has been made in the construction of aesthetic theory. Mr. Ye Lang has made outstanding contributions in this regard. He proposed a new aesthetic theory through the study of Western and Chinese philosophy.

Aesthetics belongs to the humanities and is closely related to the society, psychology, culture and tradition of a nation. Chinese scholars should study aesthetics based on Chinese culture and spirit. Being based on Chinese culture does not mean excluding foreign cultures. Chinese civilization has always been open and inclusive. The Tang Dynasty was an era of artistic prosperity. It absorbed the cultures of many countries and enriched the culture of its own nation. But absorbing foreign cultures is not It is equivalent to giving up one's own foundation. We should promote the

integration of Chinese and Western aesthetics and create an international discipline, which is still based on Chinese culture and aesthetics (Zhao Kuiying, 2021, p.157-157).

Chinese contemporary aesthetics is a discipline that has gradually developed since the reform and opening up, along with the changes in social economy, culture and thought. It not only inherits the aesthetic tradition of the Chinese nation, but also dialogues and integrates with the world's aesthetic thoughts, forming an aesthetic system with Chinese characteristics (Xiao Jianhua, 2024, p.41-56).

Unlike traditional aesthetics, Chinese contemporary aesthetics pays more attention to the reflection of social reality and the exploration of cultural identity. At the same time, it also emphasizes how to maintain its own cultural independence and originality in the dialogue with Western aesthetic thoughts in the context of globalization.

Chinese contemporary aesthetics is largely influenced by Chinese traditional culture, especially the three schools of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. These ideas are reinterpreted in contemporary aesthetics to explore aesthetic issues in modern life. While absorbing and learning from Western aesthetic ideas, Chinese contemporary aesthetics always maintains reflection and innovation on its own culture and strives to make a "Chinese voice" in the context of globalization and form an aesthetic theory system with global influence.

Analysis and Summary

Through the comparative analysis of Western aesthetics, traditional Chinese aesthetics and contemporary Chinese aesthetics, it is found that it is more appropriate to use the concept of contemporary Chinese aesthetics when studying the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. There are several important reasons based on the characteristics of contemporary Chinese aesthetics.

Firstly, contemporary Chinese aesthetics is a combination of tradition and modernity. Contemporary Chinese aesthetics deeply explores and inherits the aesthetic ideas in traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and other core ideas. These ideas are crucial to understanding the stone relief art of the Han

Dynasty. The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty contains rich cultural connotations and spiritual values, which are closely related to traditional Chinese aesthetic ideas. Through contemporary Chinese aesthetics, researcher can more comprehensively understand the cultural symbols and aesthetic expressions in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, thereby deeply exploring its artistic and cultural value.

Secondly, the combination with the reality of modern society. Contemporary Chinese aesthetics not only focuses on the inheritance of traditional culture, but also emphasizes the combination with the reality of modern society. This feature enables the study of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty to be linked to the development needs and cultural innovation of modern society. The value of Han Dynasty stone relief art in contemporary society lies not only in the archaeological research of history and culture, but also in how to achieve creative transformation and innovative development of culture through this art form and promote the progress of contemporary art and cultural creative industries.

Thirdly, dialogue with Western aesthetics. Chinese contemporary aesthetics draws on its theoretical achievements through dialogue with Western aesthetics, while adhering to Chinese characteristics. This openness and inclusiveness provide a broader perspective for studying Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Finally, adhere to the principles of cultural independence and originality. Chinese contemporary aesthetics emphasizes cultural independence and originality in the context of globalization and is committed to making a "Chinese voice". This feature is particularly important when studying Han Dynasty stone relief art. Through Chinese contemporary aesthetics, researcherrs can ensure that they adhere to the unique perspective and originality of their own culture in the research process, thereby avoiding the neglect and marginalization of local culture in the context of globalization, and further enhance the status of Han Dynasty stone relief art in the history of world art.

In his book "Principles of Aesthetics" (Ye Lang, 2009, p.178-180), Mr. Ye Lang, a

contemporary Chinese aesthetician, developed the theory of traditional Chinese aesthetics, dividing artworks into three levels: technology and materials, artistic form, and content of works. Through comparative analysis, Mr. Ye Lang's three-level division is more suitable for analyzing the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Therefore, this paper adopts Mr. Ye Lang's aesthetic concept and divides the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty into three levels for analysis: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content of the work.

This paper adopts Mr. Ye Lang's aesthetic concept and divides the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty into three levels: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content for research, which can systematically reveal the complexity and multi-level nature of these works of art. Carving technology and materials reveal the material basis and production process of the work, artistic form shows the aesthetic characteristics and visual effects of the work, and the content level reveals the thoughts and cultural connotations carried by the work. This hierarchical analysis method helps to take into account both technical and artistic aspects in the research, and ultimately achieve a comprehensive study of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty.

4.2 Materials and carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art

Han Dynasty stone reliefs are one of the products of the Han Dynasty stone handicraft industry. The discovery of tens of thousands of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and quarry sites (Figure 96), as well as the text on Han Dynasty stone reliefs, provide basic materials for studying the industry of Han Dynasty stone reliefs from quarrying to final consumption. Data show that the quarry area of Han Dynasty stone reliefs was large, and the traditional quarrying technology was mature, capable of quarrying according to the required size; the stone carving technology had developed for more than 300 years in the Han Dynasty and was quite mature by the Eastern Han Dynasty; the different styles of Han Dynasty stone reliefs indicate that there were a considerable number of Han Dynasty stone relief workshops at that time; the large number of Han

Dynasty stone relief buildings and scattered Han Dynasty stone reliefs indicate that the consumer group was large in number (Yang Aiguo, 2023, p.75-84) .

Figure 96 The site where the stone materials for the Han Dynasty relief stone were collected in Shandong.

Source: https://www.google.com/search?(2023.05)

4.2.1 Types of Stone Materials Commonly Used in Han Dynasty Stone Portrait Art

(1) Bluestone

Bluestone is one of the most common stones used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Figure 97). This stone is hard and dark in color, usually gray or gray green. Due to its high hardness, bluestone is suitable for relief and line engraving, which can show rich details and layers. The durability of bluestone also allows it to be preserved over a long

period of time, becoming an important physical material for studying Han Dynasty art today.

Figure 97 A Han Dynasty stone relief carved from bluestone
https://www.google.com/search?(2023.05)

(2) Sandstone

Sandstone is also one of the materials commonly used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Compared with bluestone, sandstone is softer in texture and lighter in color, usually yellow, gray or red. Sandstone is easy to carve and is suitable for delicate intaglio or bas-relief performances. Because sandstone is relatively soft, craftsmen can more easily carve complex patterns and fine lines on it.

Sandstone is widely used in architectural decoration, tomb murals and other artworks that need to show natural textures and colors. In many ancestral halls and tombs of the Han Dynasty, sandstone was used to carve various patterns and figures, showing rich artistic expression.

(3) Granite

Although granite was rarely used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, it was also used in some areas. Granite is very hard and mostly grayish white or grayish black in color. This stone is not easy to carve, but because of its hardness and durability, it is often

used in buildings and sculptures that need to be preserved for a long time, such as the outer walls of tombs or important sacrificial sites. Granite is very hard and highly wear-resistant and can withstand long-term weathering and erosion. This allows artworks carved from granite to be preserved for hundreds or even thousands of years.

(4) Limestone

Limestone was also used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Limestone is soft and usually off-white or yellowish in color. It is easy to work with and suitable for creating intricate patterns and details. The fine texture of limestone makes it ideal for fine carving and can be used to create complex designs.

Because of its ease of carving, limestone is often used for decorative carvings, such as tomb murals. In many Han Dynasty tombs, limestone was used to carve images depicting family life, religious ceremonies, and mythological stories.

However, limestone is not as durable as bluestone and granite and is therefore more susceptible to erosion and weathering over the long term.

(5) Shale

Shale is a relatively layered stone material, which was occasionally used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Shale is relatively brittle and easily peels or cracks when carved, so it is rarely used for large or complex pattern carvings and is usually used for some simple decorative carvings.

The selection of these stones not only depends on the local natural resources, but also is influenced by the craft traditions and cultural customs of different regions in the Han Dynasty. The physical properties of different stones have influenced the carving techniques and artistic expressions of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, making the Han Dynasty stone reliefs present diverse styles and characteristics in different regions(Liu Xingzhen,1993,P.19-24).

Table 10 Analysis and summary of the commonly used stone materials in Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Stone Type	Main Features	Color and Texture	Application and manifestation
bluestone	One of the common stones, hard in texture, suitable for relief and line engraving, strong durability	Gray or gray-green, high hardness	Used for relief and line engraving, rich in detail and well preserved
sandstone	The texture is relatively soft, easy to carve, suitable for intaglio or bas-relief, and the color is natural	Yellow, gray or red, soft texture	Commonly used in architectural decoration and tomb murals, carving complex patterns and fine lines
granite	Extremely hard, highly durable, suitable for long-term storage, not easy to carve	Grayish white or grayish black, very hard	Rarely used, mainly used for the outer walls of tombs or important sacrificial sites, strong wear resistance and weathering resistance
limestone	Soft texture, easy to process, suitable for complex pattern engraving, fine texture	Off-white or light yellow, fine texture	Commonly used for decorative carvings, such as tomb murals, depicting family life, religious rituals and mythological stories.

			It has poor preservation and is easily weathered.
shale	The texture is layered and brittle, and it is easy to peel or crack when carving, so it is relatively rarely used.	Brittle layered	Usually used for simple decorative carvings, less often for large or complex designs

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

This Table summarizes the different stones used in Han Dynasty stone relief art and their main characteristics. Each stone has its own unique physical properties, which has influenced the artistic expression and has shown diverse styles and characteristics in different regions and cultural customs.

4.2.2 Han Dynasty stone carving tools

The tools used in the production of Han Dynasty stone relief art are the key tools used by carving craftsmen to create images and decorations on stone. Since the Han Dynasty stone reliefs were formed on stone through carving techniques, this required craftsmen to use a series of specialized tools to complete the complex carving work. The following are several tools commonly used in the production of Han Dynasty stone relief art:

(1) Chisel

Chisels are one of the main tools used in Han Dynasty stone carvings. They are used to carve the outlines and details of images on the stone. There are many types of chisels, which can be divided into flat chisels, round chisels, oblique chisels, etc. according to their functions and shapes. Craftsmen use chisels of different shapes to process different parts of the stone, thus achieving detailed carving.

(2) Hammer

A hammer is a tool used in conjunction with a chisel, usually made of wood or metal. The craftsman strikes the chisel with the hammer, driving the chisel's edge into the stone, gradually carving out the desired shape. The weight and size of the hammer varies depending on the level of detail to be carved and the hardness of the stone, with lighter hammers used for fine carving and heavier hammers for rough processing.

(3) Drilling tools

In some detailed carvings that require drilling or digging deep pits, the craftsman may use a simple drilling tool. Drilling tools are usually made of hard materials and use rotation or repeated impact to open holes in the stone. This tool is particularly important when dealing with more complex patterns or when fine holes are required.

(4) Grinder

Abrasives are tools used to grind and polish the surface of stone. Craftsmen use abrasives to further process the carved stone to make the surface smoother and more delicate. These abrasives are usually made of sandstones of different coarseness and fineness and are selected according to needs. Fine abrasives are used to grind out fine textures and lines, while coarse abrasives are used for preliminary surface treatment.

(5) Engraving Knife

The chisel is a tool used to carve fine lines and patterns, especially when dealing with intaglio engraving (concave engraving) of some complex patterns. The blade of the chisel is usually sharp, and the craftsman can control the force and angle of the chisel to carve fine and clear lines on the stone.

(6) Whetstone

Grinding stones are used to sharpen the edges of carving tools and keep them sharp. As the number of uses increases, the edges of chisels and carving knives will gradually become blunt. At this time, grinding stones are needed to restore their sharpness and ensure the accuracy and effect of carving.

(7) Scraper

The scraper is used to remove impurities or excess stone chips from the surface of the stone to make the surface smoother. The scrapers come in different shapes and sizes, and the craftsman chooses the appropriate scraper to operate according to the different parts of the carving.

(8) Charcoal

When drawing a sketch, craftsmen usually use charcoal to outline the general outline of the pattern on the stone. The charcoal lines can be easily erased and adjusted, and craftsmen can carve on the stone according to the sketch.

(9) Lettering Knife

When it is necessary to carve words on stone, craftsmen will use special carving knives. The blade of this kind of knife is narrow, which can carve clear and deep words (Li Xiangshuai,2021, P.36)

The use of these tools enabled Han Dynasty craftsmen to create exquisite works of art on hard stone. The coordination and use of different tools greatly affected the final effect of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, demonstrating the high level of development of Han Dynasty carving technology and the outstanding skills of craftsmen.

4.2.3 The production process of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

The carving technique is crucial to the final effect of the Han Dynasty stone relief. In the production process of the Han Dynasty stone relief, carving is the most critical link. To deeply study a certain technical link, we first need to sort out the entire process. Through the analysis of some Han Dynasty stone relief inscriptions and existing works, we can roughly understand its production process (Liu Xingzhen,1993, p. 19-24).

(1) Hiring craftsmen: The tomb owner or his family would spend a lot of money to hire highly skilled "famous craftsmen" or "good craftsmen" to design, carve, and build the tomb. The kings and nobles might hire court craftsmen, the wealthy and the landlords would hire famous craftsmen, and the lower and middle classes would choose folk craftsmen.

(2) Overall design: The construction of a Han Dynasty tomb or ancestral hall with stone reliefs requires careful design (Figure 98), ensuring that the tomb structure is rigorous, the stone blocks are accurately sized, and the interior walls are uniform. The design also needs to take into account the identity, status, and preferences of the tomb owner to meet the requirements of the ritual system and the emotional needs of the family.

Figure 98 Reconstruction of the production process of Han Dynasty stone reliefs
Source: Photographed by the researcher at the Suide Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (March 2023)

(3) Selection and quarrying of stones: According to the design plan, the craftsmen strictly selected and quarried stones. Most of the Han Dynasty relief stones were produced in mountainous areas or near mountainous areas, but some were far away from the stone production areas, which shows the importance of selecting and quarrying stones.

(4) Making the stone blanks for Han Dynasty portraits: Craftsmen roughly processed the mined stones to make them meet the design requirements, which was the basis for the carving of Han Dynasty portrait stones. For exquisite Han Dynasty portrait

stones, not only did they need to be cut to the appropriate size, but the stone surface also needed to be chiseled flat and polished, especially for finely carved stones, such as the bluestone Han Dynasty portrait stones in Shandong. If the surface of the stone is not polished, fine carving cannot be carried out. Some rough-style Han Dynasty portrait stones make use of the natural texture of the stone, so they do not need to be polished (Yang Aiguo, 2023, p.75-84).

(5) Drawing: After the stone is made, the drawing must be drawn before it can be carved. Painters play a key role in the production of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and the quality of the drawing directly affects the final effect. Painters usually use ink or cinnabar to outline the drawing, like the "white drawing" form, and sometimes use charcoal to draw a sketch or copy the drawing to the stone through "transfer". From the inscription on the Xiang Tajun Temple in Tietou Mountain, Dong'e, Shandong, we can know that some Han Dynasty stone reliefs had special painters responsible for drawing the draft before they were carved. The inscription mentioned "painters Gao Ping Daisheng and Shao Qiangsheng" when introducing the people involved in the construction of the Xiang Tajun Temple. They should be responsible for drawing the draft on the stone surface after the stone was processed (Yang Aiguo, 2023, p.75-84).

(6) Fine carving: The stonemason carves strictly according to the drawings, especially in relief form, the stonemason's skills are particularly important. Carving is not only a reproduction of the drawings, but also an artistic creation. The stonemason and the painter need to work closely together. The painter provides the design intention, while the stonemason makes the drawings three-dimensional to make the image more vivid.

(7) Coloring: Coloring the carved Han Dynasty stone reliefs is also an important step in the production of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In terms of the artistic effect of a piece of Han Dynasty stone relief, coloring is the last step. If there is a problem, all the previous efforts will be wasted. Because the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are largely a "modified" form of murals, their coloring rules are basically the same as the coloring

rules of tomb murals. Flat coating is the basic method of coloring Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Yang Aiguo, 2023, p.75-84).

(8) Assembly

The assembly process is to assemble and combine the processed Han Dynasty stone reliefs according to the pre-designed "patterns" to form a tomb or ancestral hall. At this point, the overall project of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs is completely completed. Many Han Dynasty stone reliefs have mortise and tenon structures, through which the Han Dynasty stone reliefs can be combined "seamlessly". The process of combining these several individual building components is actually a process of creating a building.

The craftsmanship of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is sophisticated and complex. Through multiple steps such as material selection, pattern design, carving, coloring and polishing, the craftsmen created rich and colorful stone relief works of the Han Dynasty with high artistic value. These works not only show the social life and cultural beliefs of the Han Dynasty, but also reflect the development level of arts and crafts at that time and the wisdom and skills of the craftsmen.

Table 11 Analysis and summary of the production process of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Links	describe	Key Points	Influence
Hire acraftsman	The tomb owner or his family hired highly skilled craftsmen to design, carve and build the tomb.	Hiring "famous workers" or "good craftsmen"	Determines the technical level and artistic value of the entire project
Overall Design	The tomb chamber or ancestral hall is carefully designed to ensure a rigorous structure and	Rationality and artistry of design proposal	Ensure the beauty and functionality of the overall structure

	accurate stone dimensions.		
Selection and quarrying of stone	Strictly select and mine stones and determine the stones according to the design plan.	Hardness, texture and color of the stone	Affects the difficulty of carving and the preservation of the final work
Making Han Dynasty Portrait Stone	The quarried stone is rough processed, cut to size and polished.	The flatness and smoothness of the stone surface	Determines the level of detail and effect of engraving
Draw the artwork	When drawing the design on the stone, the painter uses ink or cinnabar to outline the pattern.	Accuracy and artistry of artwork	Determines the accuracy and overall artistic expression of the engraving
Finely crafted	The stonemasons carve strictly according to the drawings, especially when it comes to relief carving, the stonemason's skills are particularly important.	The fineness and three-dimensionality of the carving	Directly affects the visual effect and artistic appeal of Han Dynasty stone reliefs
Coloring	Color is applied to the carved Han Dynasty stone reliefs using methods such as flat painting.	Color uniformity and color matching	Enhance the visual beauty of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and reflect the color concept of

			Han Dynasty art
Assembly	The processed Han Dynasty stone reliefs are assembled according to the design drawings to form a tomb chamber or ancestral hall.	Precision and firmness of assembly	Ensure the structural stability and aesthetics of the tomb or ancestral hall

Source: Produced by researcher, (2024.07)

4.2.4 Carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

As one of the treasures of ancient Chinese art, the carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs reached a very high level at that time. On the basis of inheriting the skills of their predecessors, the craftsmen of the Han Dynasty continued to innovate and develop, forming a unique and rich carving technique. The following is a detailed description of the carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs from multiple aspects.

(1) Rough surface intaglio engraving

Figure 99 "Sishui Laoding" (partial) shows the carving technique of rough surface intaglio engraving

Source: Photographed by the researcher (May 2023)

Yin line carving, in simple terms, is to use stone carving tools to express objects

by carving lines on the stone. Because the carved lines are sunken in the stone, it is called Yin line carving. As shown in Figure 99. Yin line carving is the main artistic means of modeling Han Dynasty stone reliefs. This form has appeared in almost every major production area of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in the country. Yin line carving is concise and accurate in modeling. It is really amazing to create rich and moving pictures with extremely simple modeling means. Yin line carving is basically consistent with the traditional Chinese "white drawing" modeling art technique and has obvious Chinese national characteristics. In the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the form of Yin line carving not only has the pure "white drawing" art form, but also has many variations.

Most of the intaglio works are carved on polished fine bluestone, which can make the lines smooth and even. The "Portrait of the Pavilion Master and Warrior" in the Han Tomb of Cao Teng in Haozhou, Anhui Province is one of the representative works of this art form. Cao Teng was Cao Cao's grandfather and a famous eunuch in the late Han Dynasty. There was a jade suit with silver threads buried in his tomb, which showed his noble status. The person responsible for making the Han Dynasty portrait stone for Cao Teng's tomb should be a court painter, representing the highest level in the late Eastern Han Dynasty. This Han Dynasty portrait stone is carved on the south wall of the tomb corridor. It is made of multiple stone slabs and depicts the image of the pavilion master and the warrior. The artistic effect is solemn and majestic.

Feng Qiyong pointed out in his evaluation of this work that the basic feature of Chinese painting is to express the object with lines, and lines are extremely expressive in the hands of Chinese painters. He believes that the origin of Gu Kaizhi's line painting style in the Eastern Jin Dynasty can be seen from these line-carved figures. In terms of art, this painting occupies an important position in the history of Chinese art. The figures in the painting are accurately and vividly modeled, full of personality, reflecting the theme of "depicting the spirit with the form". The painter used the traditional Chinese line drawing technique, and the lines are smooth and natural, perfectly showing the texture of the characters and objects. This painting marks the maturity of the line

drawing technique of Chinese figure painting and is an important work in the history of Chinese art.

Figure 100 The figure riding the dragon shows the naive intaglio technique
Source: Photographed by the researcher (May 2023)

Although the naive intaglio engraving is not as smooth as the skilled art forms, the lines present a unique "metal and stone flavor" of rough beauty precisely because they are carved on a relatively rough stone surface. There are indeed some folk painters whose techniques are naive, but also have unique interest. For example, the " Figure Riding a Dragon " (Figure 100) unearthed in Zhengxian and Yuzhou, Henan Province, has a peculiar shape and is full of childlike interest.

In addition, there are incised lines with decorative effects, such as works that combine incised lines with decorative pockmarks.

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Figure 101 “Hebaek’s Procession” shows the carving technique of combining intaglio engraving with decorative pockmarks

Source: Photographed by the researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (May 2023)

In "He Bo's Tour" (Figure 101), after the stonemasons used negative lines to carve out the images, they also chiseled out dots on the bodies of the figures, dragons and fish. This is a clever art of texture processing. The lines that outline the figures and the dots on the figures form a wonderful composition of dots and lines, which is very modern. This form of expression can be found in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shaanxi, Shanxi, Jiangsu, Shandong and other places.

Yin-line engraving combines the technique of decorative short lines, depicting the outline and main structure of the image with smooth long lines, and then decorating the inside with short lines, enriching the picture effect. For example, in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Jiuding Town, Lingbi County, Anhui Province, the outlines of people and animals are prominent, and their bodies are decorated with thin short lines, which enhances the regularity and overall sense of the picture.

(2) Convex surface engraving

Convex surface incised line carving is to first process the stone to be relatively flat, then reduce the "background" outside the image, so that the image is naturally preserved and protrudes from the picture, and then the details of the image are carved with incised lines, so it is also called "reduced ground incised line carving" (Figure 102). Because the form of "reduced ground" is not single, this artistic technique can be divided into the following categories:

Figure 102 Phoenix and dancing music show the convex intaglio engraving technique with a flat background

Source: Photographed by the researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (May 2023)

The background is a convex intaglio engraving, which is a technique of engraving details on a convex image with intaglio lines, while the background retains fine parallel chiseling patterns (Figure 103). In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, this technique was very popular in Jiaxiang, Shandong. The famous Wu Family Temple Han Dynasty stone

relief group uses this technique and is known as the "King of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs."

Figure 103 The Sun Bird, showing the carving technique of convex intaglio with a chiseled background

Source: Photographed by the researcher at Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum (May 2023)

The background is a flattened convex intaglio engraving, which is similar to the chiseled background technique, but the background has been flattened. The flatness of the background varies, some are flat and deep, and some are rough with shovel marks, creating a fabric-like texture effect and increasing the artistic sense of the picture.

(3) Subtractive painting

The subtractive painting method refers to reducing the "painting ground" outside the image to make the image stand out, and then using ink lines or colors to outline the flat image. Subtracting the ground is a pure sculpture method, while using a brush to paint on a flat stone is an authentic painting method. Most of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Suide, Shaanxi (Figure 104) are unique in the world of Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art because they take into account both sculpture and painting.

Figure 104 Images of Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East, Nuwa and Fuxi in Suide , showing the technique of subtractive painting and carving

Source: Photographed by the researcher in Suide County, Yulin City, Shaanxi Province (May 2023)

On the doorposts on both sides of the tomb chamber, symmetrical images of the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East, Nuwa and Fuxi are often carved, surrounding the Jade Rabbit that is pounding the elixir of immortality, the Three-legged Crow that is finding food for the Queen Mother of the West, the Nine-tailed Fox that is guarding the gate, and the Chicken-headed Deity holding Ganoderma lucidum (Li Hong,1991,p.82-87).

(4) Bas-relief

The so-called bas-relief means first making the stone flat, then reducing the "background" outside the image, and finally carving the volume transition, ups and downs and changes of the image on the protruding stone surface in the form of source carving. This method is often used in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Xuzhou, Nanyang and other places.

Figure 105 The procession of carriages and horses (partial) demonstrates the bas-relief technique

Source: Photographed by the researcher (May 2023)

In the treatment of relief art, people often pay great attention to the relationship between the edge of the image and the figure and ground.

When we see a head portrait on a coin (Figure 105), the height of its protrusion may be only one or two millimeters, but in people's vision, it has a clear effect of ups and downs and vivid images. The secret of its success lies in the subtle changes in the edge of the image and the relationship between the figure and the ground. After the edges of the four groups of relief images with the same height of the figure and the ground are processed in different ways, people find that the visual "height" of these four groups of reliefs has changed to a certain extent. Of course, this is a visual illusion, but every plastic artist is a visually brilliant "cheater", and the secret of the success of this "cheat" is that people have visual illusions.

Figure 106 Shows the technique of bas-relief and intaglio engraving
Source: Photographed by the researcher (May 2023)

(5) Shallow relief with intaglio (Figure 106) This form is to first highlight the image from the ground, process it with relief techniques, and then use intaglio to carve out the general features of the image. The intaglio at this time is basically the same as the principle of plane intaglio, except that it is carved on the image with fluctuating volume. Shallow relief with intaglio is the most common artistic treatment method in the form of shallow relief Han Dynasty portrait stone. This has two advantages: first, the relief form makes the image stand out, and second, the vivid intaglio can make the audience understand the image in the painting in more detail. This artistic treatment method occupies a mainstream position in the relief form of Han Dynasty portrait stone across the country.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shangqiu, Henan, Xuzhou, Jiangsu and other places mostly use the technique of shallow relief and decorative line engraving. Especially in the depiction of birds, beasts and mythical beasts, the protruding shapes are processed with thick or thin, dense or sparse, round or square, straight or curved

intaglio lines. Some are overlapping scales, and some are densely arranged with hair, which has a strong sense of decoration and fully expresses the "weirdness" of mythical beasts and the "agility" of birds and beasts.

There are other image decoration techniques in the relief-style Han Dynasty portrait stones in Xuzhou, Jiangsu and other places, which are worth learning from by today's art workers. For example, in order to express the differences in the characters' clothing, the craftsmen used grid patterns, obvious small chisel patterns, dotted chisel marks, or polished smoothness, and combined with the natural rough texture of the stone, it is really "all kinds of" to "force out" the image to be flexible and vivid.

(6) High relief

The volume fluctuation of high relief is much larger than that of general relief (bas-relief), and it is between relief (bas-relief) and round sculpture. In Figure 107, a Hu man is squatting on the back of a bear, with the bear's eyes wide open. The Hu man has a pointed head on his head.

From an artistic point of view, this portrait is concise, with a general volume, very vivid and lifelike, and exaggerated.

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Figure 107 "Hu people playing the flute" shows the effect of high relief in Han Dynasty stone relief art

Source: Photographed by the researcher at (May 2023)

Table 12 analyzes and summarizes the different carving techniques, characteristics and application scenarios of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

Carving Techniques	describe	Application Scenario	Technical features
Intaglio engraving on rough stone surface	The concave line engraving technique is used on the surface of the stone to create smooth and accurate lines.	It was widely used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs and was often seen in tomb murals and ancestral hall wall decorations.	The lines are concise and vivid, with a "white drawing" effect.
Inscribed in	Through the	It is commonly seen	The image is

convex negative lines	“reduced ground” technique, the image is made to protrude from the picture, and the details are depicted with negative lines.	in Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Jiaxiang, Shandong and other areas in the late Eastern Han Dynasty.	detailed, and the background processing adds layering and artistic feel to the picture.
Reduce the background and then depict	Reducing the background and then carving or coloring it on the plane combines the two artistic techniques of engraving and painting.	Han Dynasty stone reliefs are commonly found in Suide, Shaanxi and other places.	It combines sculpture and painting to form a unique artistic style that is particularly suitable for the expression of mythological and religious themes.
Bas-relief	Reduce the background to make the image stand out from the plane and use carving to express the volume changes and ups and downs.	Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Xuzhou, Nanyang and other places were widely used in scenes such as tombs and ancestral halls.	The image is vivid, the edge processing focuses on the difference in height, and it has a visual illusion effect.
Bas-relief method plus intaglio engraving	Because of bas-relief, the image details are carved out with intaglio	It is commonly used in Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shangqiu, Henan	It enriches the layering of the picture, makes the image more vivid

	lines, combining the advantages of the two techniques.	and Xuzhou, Jiangsu, and is especially suitable for depicting birds, beasts and mythical beasts.	and detailed, and has strong decorative effect.
High relief	It is between relief and round sculpture, with large fluctuations in volume and exaggerated and vivid images.	Used in specific scenes, such as Han Dynasty stone reliefs depicting myths or exaggerated characters.	It has a strong sense of three-dimensionality, vivid and exaggerated images, and is suitable for expressing complex scenes.

Source: Produced by researcherr, (2024.07)

Analysis and summary

Through an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the stone materials, tools and carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, it is revealed how the craftsmen used these elements to create works of great artistic value. The choice of stone determines the application of carving techniques, while the use of tools directly affects the fineness and expressiveness of the carving. This complex interactive relationship reflects the wisdom and skills of the craftsmen of the Han Dynasty. In the carving process, they not only inherited the skills of their predecessors, but also continued to innovate and develop a unique and rich artistic style. The carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only reflect the craftsmen's superb skills and artistic creativity, but also through a variety of techniques such as high relief, shallow relief and line engraving, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly display rich

themes such as daily life, religious sacrifices, historical stories, etc., forming a unique artistic style. The study of the carving techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs has important academic value for understanding the development and evolution of ancient Chinese carving art and inheriting and innovating traditional skills.

4.3 Study and analysis of the aesthetic form of Han Dynasty stone relief art

4.3.1 The composition art of Han Dynasty stone relief art

When talking about the composition of paintings, people will immediately think of concepts such as focal perspective, triangular composition, vertical composition, horizontal composition, and S-shaped composition. There is nothing wrong with these, but the understanding of composition cannot be limited to the "classical" rules of the West, because Chinese art has its own charm and rules. There are many things in the composition rules of traditional Chinese art that are worth learning, learning from, studying and exploring (Wang Yiran & Yang Xufei, 2021,p.36-47).

(1) Layered composition

The layered composition method in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is an important composition method. By dividing the picture into multiple layers, the artist can effectively organize complex narrative content, express the hierarchical differences of characters and scenes, and express profound symbolic meanings. This composition method not only enriches the layering of the picture, but also reflects the hierarchical concept and worldview of Han Dynasty society.

Layered composition is a way of dividing the picture into multiple horizontal layers, each showing different contents. This form of layering can be found in bronzes from the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Common forms of layering include two or more layers. The lower layer usually depicts the ground or secular scenes, while the upper layer shows the sky, mythological scenes or high-ranking figures. This composition method clearly expresses the spatial sense of the picture and the progressive relationship of the story. Han Dynasty artists implied the

relationship between the front and the back through the size of the characters and the arrangement of the layers, such as the main characters or buildings in the front are larger, and the secondary characters or distant views in the background are smaller.

This composition method makes the complex image content appear in an orderly manner, enhancing the layering and visual order of the picture. Layered composition is an important expression technique in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Through it, artists can effectively organize narrative content, express the hierarchical differences between characters and scenes, and express profound symbolic meanings. For example, the portrait of "Queen Mother of the West, Hundred Plays, and Chariots and Horses" (Figure 108) unearthed in Xihukou Village, Sangcun Town, Tengzhou, Shandong Province, shows the changes in the picture structure through eight layers of layered composition, creating a combination of static and dynamic effects.

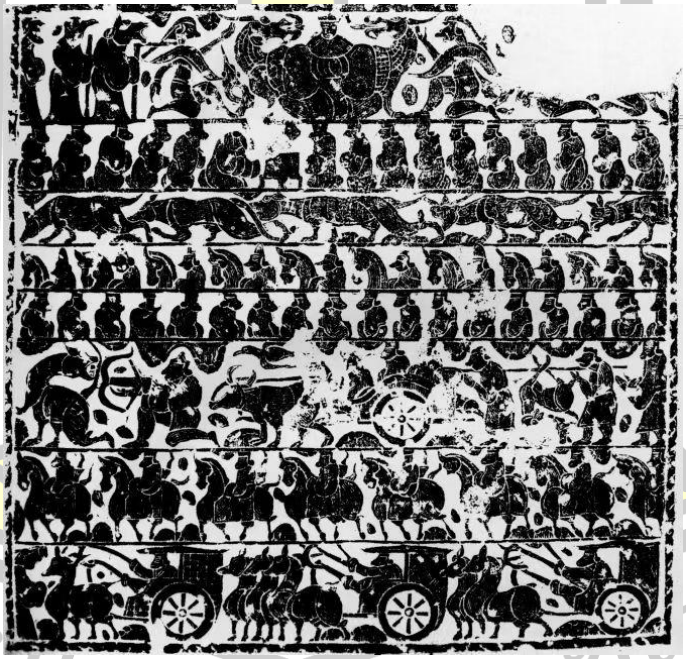

Figure 108 " Queen Mother of the West, Hundred Plays, and Chariots and Horses " (rubbing) uses a multi-layered composition

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

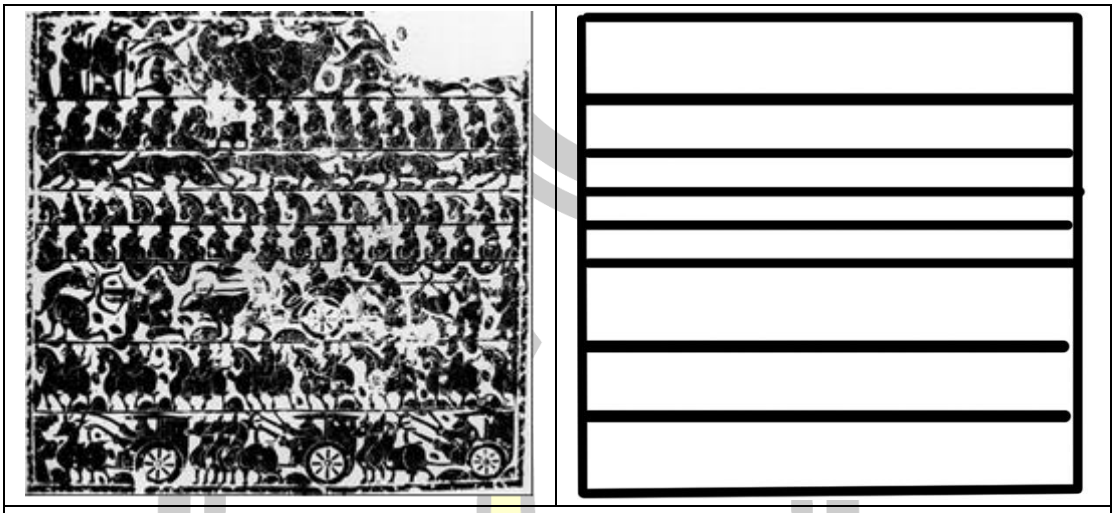

Figure 109 Analysis of multi-layer composition
Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

Through the analysis of the structure of the picture (Figure 109), we can feel this composition method more clearly. It can be seen that our ancestors had a very mature "composition art" as early as 2,000 years ago, and they were also innovative and varied. For example, "Queen Mother of the West, Historical Stories" (Figure 110) also uses this layered composition method. Compared with the Western "composition art" we accept today, this layered composition is more flexible. It seems that as a Chinese artist, it is very necessary to learn our traditional things first.

(2) Screen partition composition

The composition of Han Dynasty relief stones on the walls or ceilings of tombs or ancestral halls but is also an important composition form on a single Han Dynasty relief stone. (figure 110 and figure 111) We can see this phenomenon in the composition of Han Dynasty relief stones in Weishan, Jining, Zoucheng and other places in Shandong Province, as shown in figures 110 and 111. For example, some Han Dynasty relief stones unearthed in Weishan, Weishan County, Shandong Province are generally 240~280 cm wide and more than 80 cm high. They are divided into three parts: left, middle and right in the picture, and their heights are basically the same.

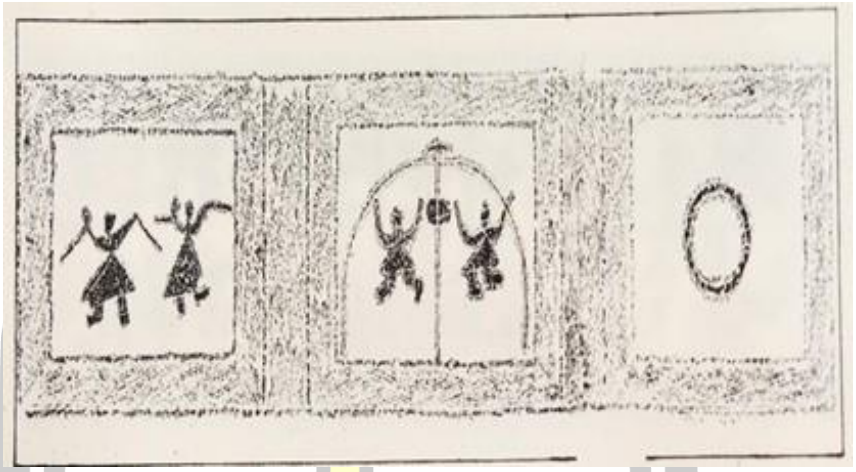

Figure 110 “Long-sleeved dance, drumming, and the sun” uses Screen partition composition

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

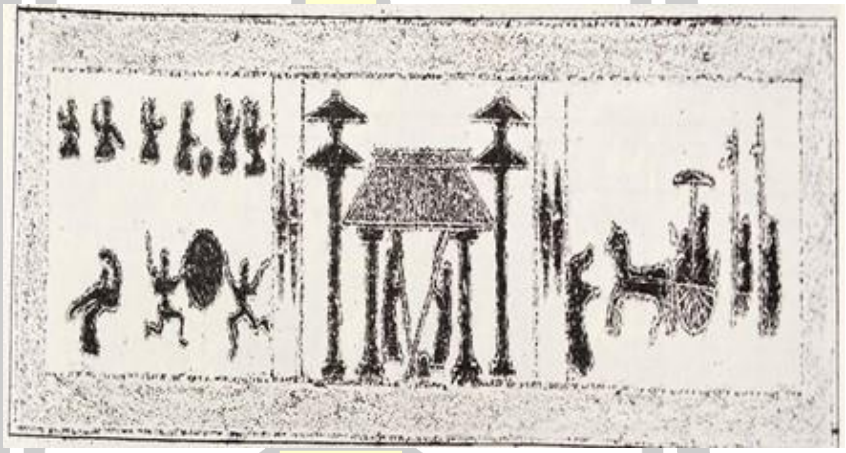

Figure 111 “Dance, Music, Architecture, and Travel” uses Screen partition composition

Source: provided by a personal

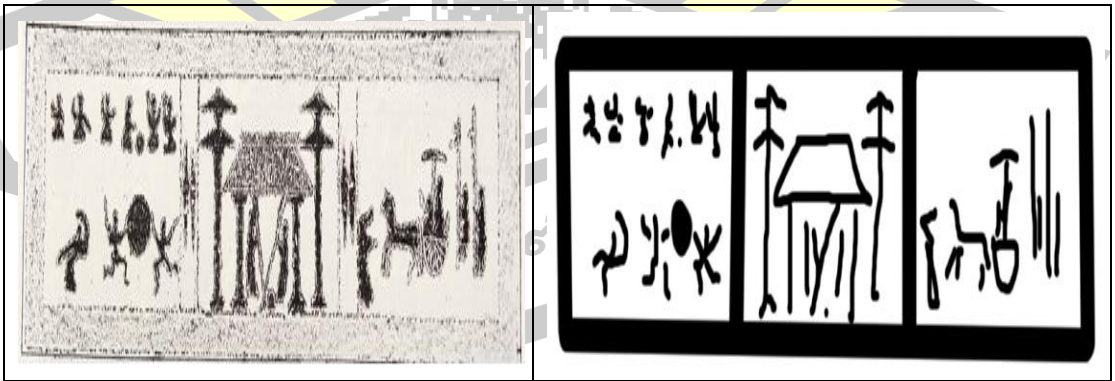

Figure 112 Analysis of Screen partition composition

Source: Drawn by researcherr (2024.08)

Through the analysis of the structure of the painting (Figure 112), we can feel that the Screen partition composition not only has its unique effect in terms of content expression but is also excellent in terms of decorativeness. This composition method enhances the visual appeal of the painting through repeated forms and symmetrical designs, while also demonstrating the decorative aesthetics of Han Dynasty art.

In short, Screen partition composition method is not only a layout method in the Han Dynasty stone relief art, but also an artistic expression method. It achieves the purpose of highlighting the theme, enhancing the sense of hierarchy and space, and achieving decorative effects through the clever division and arrangement of the picture space. It is a common and effective composition form in the Han Dynasty stone relief art

(3) Nine-grid composition

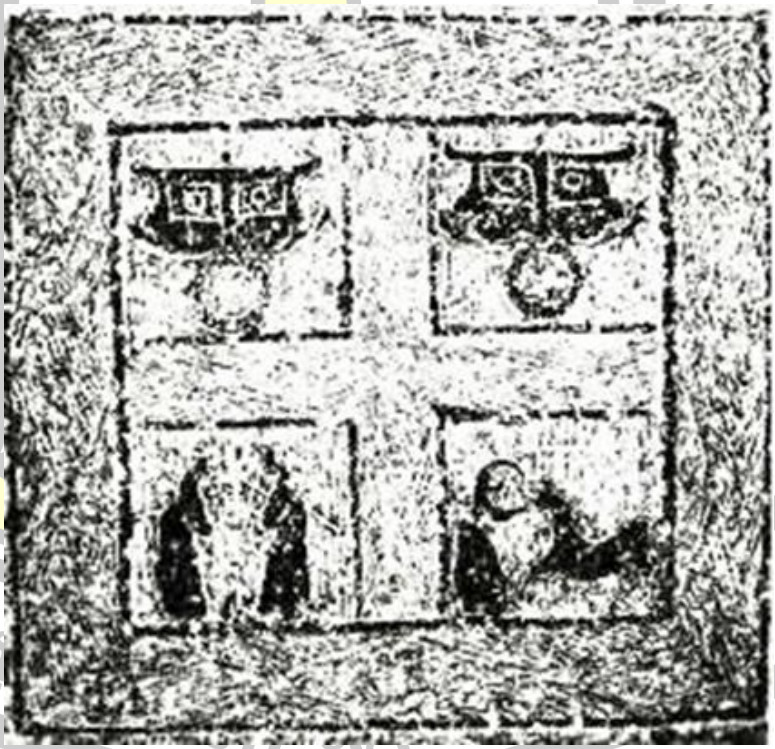

Figure 113 A Han Dynasty stone relief using a Nine-grid composition.
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The Nine-grid is one of the traditional forms of picture composition in ancient my country (figure 113). To put it simply, the picture is divided into three units of length and width, and connected, thus forming nine squares of the same area, with some images or patterns filling in between. However, in the ancient traditional picture composition, the Nine-grid is not so "rigid".

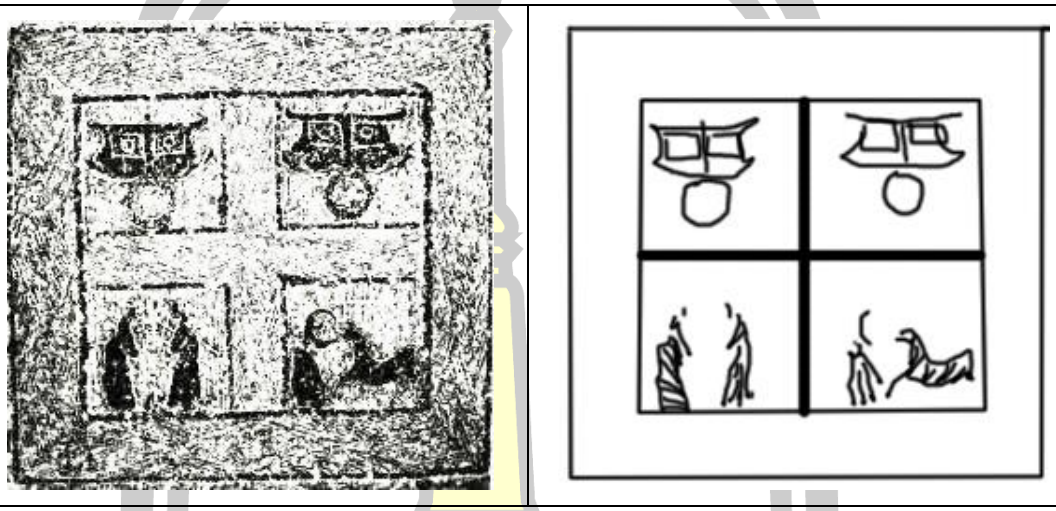

Figure 114 Nine-grid composition analysis
Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

Through the analysis of the structure of the painting (Figure 114), several small pictures of equal (or similar) area are arranged regularly from top to bottom and from left to right, which has the artistic charm of "repetition" in plane composition, and at the same time can achieve the overall unity of the picture. Because several squares are neatly arranged in the picture, it is easy to form a kind of mathematical relationship beauty in people's vision. In fact, in the art of composition, China is by no means inferior to the so-called "composition art" of the West, and it is far ahead of the West in time. This composition method is often used in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Xuzhou, Jiangsu and other places.

(4) Film strip composition

Film strips are usually arranged vertically in rectangular images of fixed proportions. This arrangement is called "repetitive" arrangement, which has a unified aesthetic and musical order and rhythm. This form of composition can also be seen in

many comic strips. In the Han tombs in Suide, Shandong and Shaanxi, this arrangement is common on vertical stones or tomb door vertical stones. In particular, in the Han Dynasty relief stones in Suide, the vertically arranged images are mostly dancing images. In addition, in the Han Dynasty relief stones in Wuliang Shrine in Jiaxiang, Shandong and other places, there is also a form of arranging "film strips" horizontally, with human figures standing upright in them (Figures 115 and 116), which is a variation of the "film strip composition method".

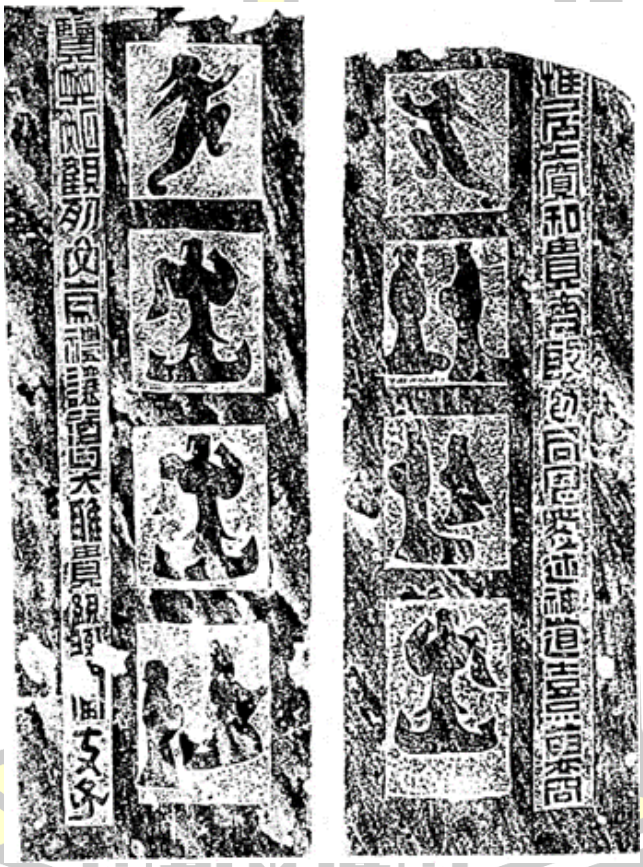

Figure 115 Feathered Man, Dance, and Words, a Han Dynasty stone relief showing a film strip composition

Source: https://www.google.com/search?(2023.05)

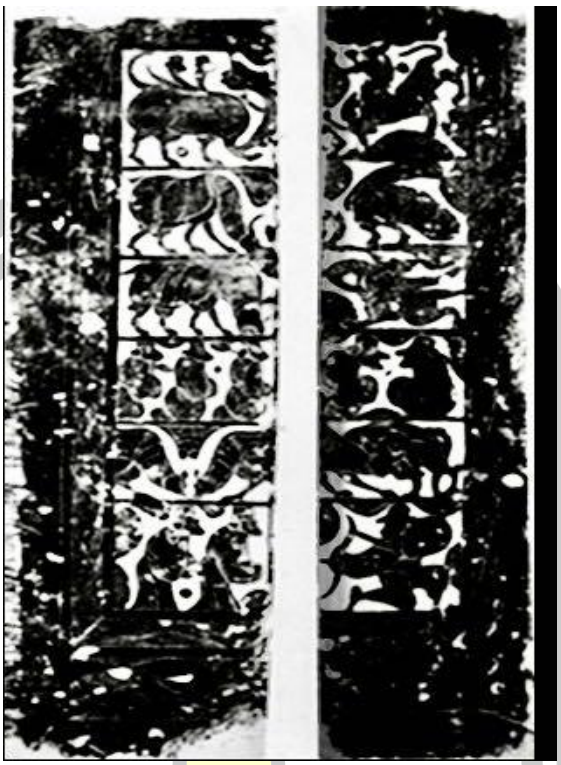

Figure 116 Spiritual Beasts and Figures, a Han Dynasty stone relief with a film strip composition

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

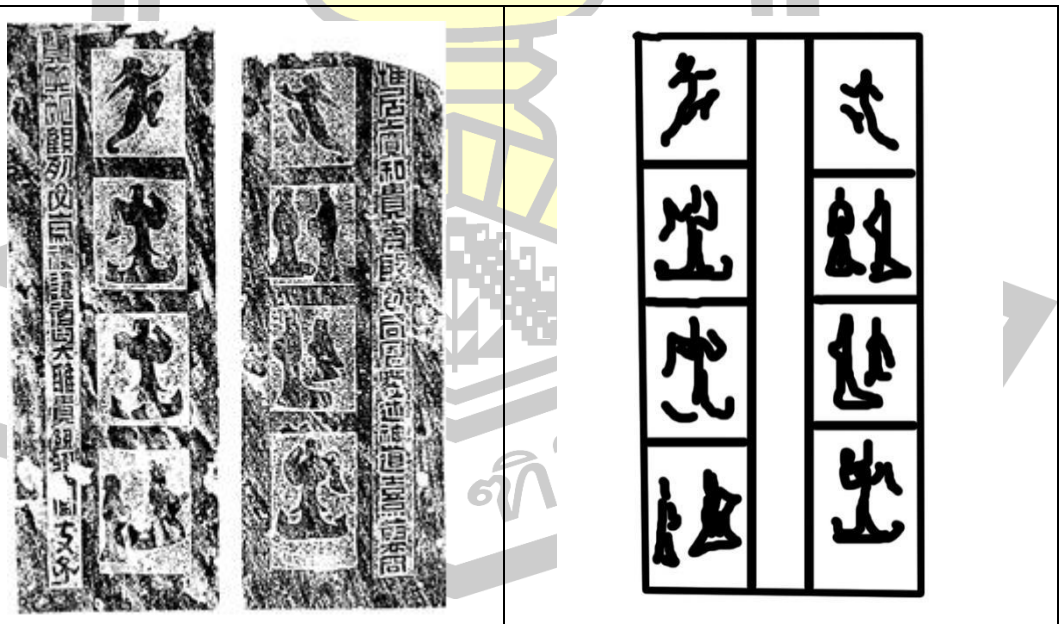

Figure 117 Film-style composition method composition analysis diagram

Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

From the analysis of the film strip composition (Figure 117), we can see that the film strip composition forms a structure like a film by dividing the characters or scenes into multiple relatively independent but interrelated parts. This segmented arrangement emphasizes repetition, giving the picture a sense of rhythm and order. Although each picture is divided into small pieces, the repetition of similar scenes or actions forms a visual connection between these small pieces. This composition method not only enhances the overall sense of the picture, but also ensures the coherence between the parts.

Although this composition method divides the picture into multiple parts, each part can show a different sense of spatial hierarchy, which makes the whole picture show rich visual depth on the two-dimensional plane.

Through this composition method, Han Dynasty stone reliefs were able to effectively organize complex plots and highlight key actions or scenes, while also ensuring the visual order and beauty of the picture. This method is very effective for expressing long narratives or scenes with strong continuity, reflecting the superb ability of Han Dynasty artists in spatial organization and narrative skills.

(5) Repeated and specific composition

The repetitive elements in Han Dynasty stone relief art are often reflected in the repeated appearance of similar or identical patterns, gestures, and scenes (figure 118). This repetitive technique not only emphasizes the importance of a specific theme, but also creates a sense of rhythm. For example, the continuous appearance of matrix figures, similar architectural structures, and the same type of animal images. This repetition makes the overall picture unified and also strengthens the viewer's visual memory. Among the large number of repetitive elements, some specific elements are often deliberately arranged in Han Dynasty stone reliefs as the visual focus of the entire picture. This specificity can be achieved through changes in posture, shifts in composition, or the introduction of unique images in a repetitive background. Specific elements are often used to highlight the protagonist, important scenes, or symbolic

themes, thereby achieving a prominent effect in the overall repetition.

Figure 118 The picture of "Preaching the Sutra" shows the repeated arrangement - queue composition

Source: Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 119 Repeated and unique composition analysis

Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

Especially in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang, we often see a combination of dynamic and static compositions. In the Han Dynasty portrait art "Lecture on the Sutra", we can see a total of six characters in the painting, five listeners and a lecturer. The postures and positions of these characters show obvious repetition. All the listeners are arranged in a similar sitting posture with almost the same gestures. This repetitive composition not only gives the picture a sense of order visually, but also strengthens the solemnity and unity of this scene. The costumes and facial features of each character are also treated in a repetitive manner, further enhancing the harmony of the picture. This repetitiveness shows a collective solemn atmosphere, highlighting the solemnity and consistency of the lecture activity.

Through repeated and specific composition analysis (Figure 119), we can find by adopting repeated and unique composition methods, the relationship between the speaker and the listener in the ancient lecture occasions is fully reflected. On the one hand, the repeated composition method ensures the overall order and harmony of the picture, conveying the collective atmosphere and the solemnity of the activity; on the other hand, the unique status and actions of the speaker are highlighted through the

unique composition method, giving the whole picture a vividness and layering, making the lecture scene both unified and varied in form. This composition technique is common in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, reflecting the balance and beauty pursued by artists at that time when expressing character relationships and social scenes.

(6) Scattered perspective composition

Scattered Perspective Composition is a common composition method in traditional Chinese painting. In this composition, the multiple viewpoints in the picture are not from a fixed angle but use multiple viewpoints to show different parts of the scene. This composition method breaks the common single perspective point in Western painting (such as focal perspective), making the content of the picture richer and more diverse, and better able to show the overall picture and layering of the scene.

Figure 120 Architecture and People shows the Scattered perspective composition
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

From the picture "Architecture, Figures" (Figure 120), we can see the application of scattered perspective. By analyzing this picture, we can see the following characteristics of scattered perspective in composition.

The painting "Architecture, People", but multiple viewpoints are used to show different scenes and people's activities. This multi-viewpoint processing method allows the picture to show activities in different spaces and scenes at the same time, breaking

the limitation of a single perspective.

In the picture, multiple buildings and human activities are juxtaposed in the same picture. Although these scenes may actually be located in different spaces or times, they are displayed simultaneously through the technique of scattered perspective, providing the viewer with a panoramic perspective. Scattered perspective makes the picture show a three-dimensional sense and layering on the plane. The arrangement of the buildings, the dynamics of the characters, and even the elements in the background are presented from different viewpoints and angles, which enhances the richness and depth of the picture.

In the picture, we can see that the dynamic sense of human activities contrasts with the static sense of buildings. The application of scattered perspective allows these dynamic and static elements to coexist harmoniously in the same picture, and their respective expressions are not limited to a single perspective.

The whole picture is not centered on a certain focus, but through the use of scattered perspective, each part is independent and closely connected. The viewer can enter the picture from any point, move along the clues in the picture, and gradually understand the whole scene.

In summary, this Han Dynasty stone relief artwork makes full use of the composition method of scattered perspective, adding more layers and three-dimensionality to the scene in the picture, allowing the viewer to experience the rich life of Han Dynasty society from multiple angles.

(7) Large and small white space compositions

In a picture with a fixed area and shape, generally speaking, if there are many characters, the remaining space in the picture - white space will be less, otherwise, there will be more white space.

From a human perspective, if there are more people in a space within a unit area, the atmosphere of the space will become active, otherwise it will be relatively quiet.

Large amount of blank space and few main subjects - the picture is calm. The

composition form of large amount of blank space and few main subjects often appears in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Tengzhou. It can also be said to be one of the artistic characteristics of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Tengzhou.

Figure 121 “Han Dynasty Cavalry” shows a composition with a large amount of white space and a small number of subjects.

Source: Tengzhou Yanghan Painting Museum in March 2023

Figure 122 Composition analysis of a picture with a large amount of white space and a small number of subjects

Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

The Han Dynasty stone relief "Han Dynasty Cavalry" (figure 121) shows the use of a large amount of blank space in the composition. There is a large area of blank space in the picture, and the blank part has no decoration or carving, giving the viewer a sense of open space. The use of a large amount of blank space is common in ancient Chinese art. It can highlight the subject and focus the viewer's attention on the depicted characters and actions. At the same time, it also creates a sense of depth of space and

tranquility of atmosphere.

Through the analysis of this composition with a large amount of blank space (Figure 122), we can more easily see that the proportion of the figure and the horse is relatively small compared to the area of the entire stone surface. This treatment method not only does not weaken the expressiveness of the picture, but on the contrary, through the technique of "seeing the big from the small", it enhances the overall sense of space and the depth of the story. Although the dynamics of the figure and the horse occupy a small proportion of the picture, their detailed depiction and powerful lines make the main body more vivid and prominent against the background of the blank space.

Although the main body is relatively small, the dynamics of the figures and horses are very obvious, especially the galloping posture of the horses and the movements of the knights, which make the picture full of vitality. It also expresses the balance and pursuit of movement and stillness, virtuality and reality in Han Dynasty art.

In summary, this Han Dynasty stone relief uses a large amount of blank space and a small-scale main composition, which not only visually highlights the contrast between dynamic and static, but also conveys a profound artistic conception through spatial contrast, showing the unique understanding and expression of space, movement and stillness and harmony in Han Dynasty art.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shandong, Jiangsu, Anhui and other places generally show the characteristics of full composition and dense arrangement of images. As shown in Figure 123. This kind of composition form is especially common in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in the Stone Shrine in Jiaxiang , Shandong. People generally call it "intensive composition". For example, on some Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Wu's Shrine and Xiaotang Mountain, dozens or even hundreds of people are densely concentrated on one Han Dynasty stone relief, which is a typical "intensive composition".

Although these pictures have an almost "airtight" composition, they do not appear "stuffy". These dense pictures give people a sense of orderliness, regularity, seriousness,

heaviness and dignity. This picture effect may be because the craftsmen drew on the dense artistic treatment of the lacquerware and bronzeware decoration pictures of the Han Dynasty and its predecessors when creating the Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

As for individual images, the images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shandong ancestral halls are generally full of a sense of integrity, with small movements, restrained limbs, wide robes and strong bodies, and they are very solemn. However, the "blank spaces" of various shapes and shapes formed among these densely packed figures "brighten" the audience's eyes. Therefore, the picture is still filled with a lively atmosphere, which can be called "liveliness in solemnity."

Figure 123 "Queen Mother of the West, Dancing, Fishing" rubbings unearthed in Suxian, Anhui

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

(8) Symmetrical composition

In some of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, the two warriors practicing martial

arts (or fighting) and the dancers dancing facing each other are often "arranged" in a symmetrical form to show the situation of "matching each other and being evenly matched". They either "fight hand to hand" with weapons or "come into close contact" with long sleeves, forming the symmetry of the overall image without separation, completing the unity of the picture. In addition, pictures such as "Double Dragons Passing Through the Jade", "Fuxi and Nuwa", "Six Games", "Dancing" (figure 124), "Fishing the Tripod in Sishui" and so on are also mostly symmetrical compositions.

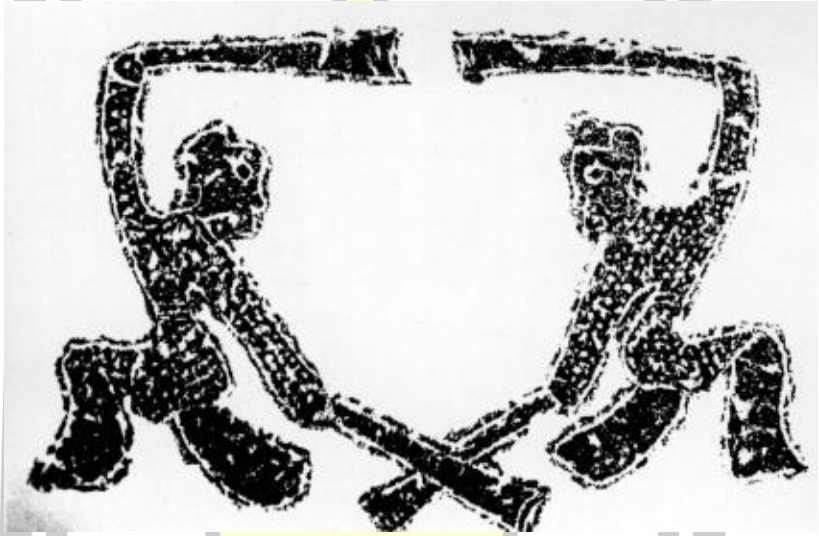

Figure 124 "Dancing " shows a symmetrical composition
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

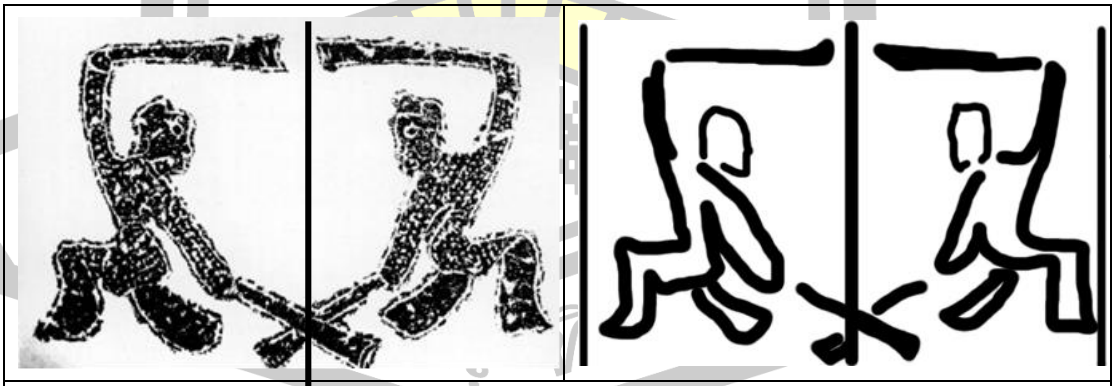

Figure 125 Symmetrical structure analysis diagram
Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

From the symmetric structure analysis diagram (Figure 125), we can see that the

body positions and movements of the two figures are perfectly symmetrically distributed on the horizontal plane. This symmetrical composition technique makes the whole picture look very harmonious, and the viewer's sight is naturally guided to the center of the picture, and then expands outward from the center. This composition method is often used to express the balance between static and dynamic, and it frequently appears in Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Symmetry is not only an aesthetic pursuit in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, but also contains the values of harmony and balance in the society at that time. Symmetrical composition symbolizes the stability of social order and interpersonal relationships, especially when depicting ritual scenes such as dance and sacrifice, this symmetry can better convey the coordination and resonance in collective activities.

This "Dance" painting uses a highly symmetrical composition technique, which not only shows the beauty of dance movements, but also expresses the importance of harmony and order in Han Dynasty art. Symmetrical composition is not only a visual technique in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, but also a cultural symbol, reflecting the society's pursuit of harmony and balance at that time. This symmetrical composition rule has become an important means of expression in Han Dynasty art, running through various themes of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

(9) Suitable composition

In pattern art, there is a pattern composition form called "suitable pattern". The so-called suitable pattern refers to changing the image to make it consistent with the shape of the picture. In other words, the pattern is the same shape as the "frame", so that the pattern fits the shape of the picture. For example, some dragon patterns in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the dragons should stretch their bodies but bend their necks and curl their tails to fit the square shape of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. This suitable composition form can easily make the picture feel full and substantial. The " Phoenix and Strange Beasts" in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang area also belongs to this kind of composition mode. As shown in Figure 126.

Figure 126 " Phoenix and Exotic Beasts" (rubbing) uses a suitable composition
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 127 Suitability composition analysis
Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

From the analysis of the image of the suitable composition (Figure 127), we can more easily see the manifestation of the suitable composition. The content of the picture is cleverly arranged in the triangular frame, showing the characteristics of the suitable composition. The composition image, such as the posture and dynamics of people or animals, is adjusted and compressed to fit the boundary of the triangle. Such processing ensures the harmonious unity of the content of the picture and the shape of the frame. The suitable composition effectively utilizes the entire available space by compressing the content of the picture into a specific geometric shape. All elements are compactly arranged in the triangle, avoiding the waste of blank area and enhancing the

compactness and integrity of the picture.

Table 13 summarizes the various composition methods and characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Composition	Manifestation
Layered composition	Dividing the picture into multiple horizontal levels to display different content or plots is often used to present complex narratives.
Screen partition composition	Dividing the picture into three parts achieves a balanced and unified artistic effect, often used to depict different scenes.
nine-square grid composition	Divide the picture into small squares with a length and width of three units each and arrange them neatly to achieve the overall unity of the picture.
Film strip composition	Rectangular images similar to movie films are arranged up and down to create a sense of rhythm and visual guidance.
Repeat and Specificity composition	Highlight key themes and enhance visual interest by contrasting repeated and distinctive elements.
Scattered perspective composition	Use multiple viewpoints to show different parts of the scene, breaking the single perspective point and enriching the picture content.
Large and small white space compositions	Balance the number of subjects and blank space in the picture to create a

	harmonious visual effect and emphasize the combination of movement and stillness.
Symmetrical composition	It expresses harmony and balance through symmetrically arranged elements and is often used to express the balance between static and dynamic.
Suitable composition	Adjust the pattern image to fit the shape of the frame to create a full and substantial visual experience.

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.07)

4.3.2 Superb Line Expression Language

Lines are one of the most fundamental elements in the visual language of painting and art. In the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, the use of lines played a pivotal role, placing emphasis on their vivid and expressive qualities. This approach contrasts with the highly realistic and volumetric sculptures of the ancient Roman period, which focused more on detailed replication of physical forms. As John Ruskin, the renowned art critic, once observed, "Strictly speaking, only when a person has mastered the accurate and powerful language of lines can we call him a great painter." In painting and relief work, the significance of lines is twofold: first, they are essential for defining contours and shapes, and second, they possess inherent artistic value, capable of conveying movement, emotion, and dynamism.

The aesthetic beauty of Han Dynasty stone relief art lies in its unique formal qualities, particularly the expressive use of lines carved into hard stone. The labor-intensive nature of stone carving during this period highlighted the exceptional creativity and craftsmanship of the artists. Despite the inherent challenges of working with stone—a medium resistant to delicate manipulation—the artists of the Han Dynasty were able to produce complex and diverse compositions, demonstrating their

rich imagination and extraordinary skill (Wang Yiran & Yang Xufei, 2021,p36-47).

The precision required to carve intricate and smooth lines on a tough surface like stone demanded not only immense patience but also advanced technical proficiency. The lines carved in Han relief art were not merely functional, defining the outlines of figures and objects; they also conveyed the rhythm, vitality, and character of the depicted subjects. The fluidity and power of these lines were essential in animating the figures, making them appear lively despite being etched into a rigid material.

To carve curves and flowing shapes into stone, artists needed a profound understanding of the stone's properties, knowing how to manipulate it without compromising the integrity of the design. The control over the carving tools was paramount, as even slight variations in pressure could break the flow of the lines. This mastery over both the medium and the tools allowed Han Dynasty craftsmen to maintain the continuity and consistency of lines, imbuing their work with a sense of movement and grace that belied the static nature of the stone itself.

Figure 128 "Cow" (rubbing) shows the smooth contour lines of the image
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 129 "Hunting" (rubbing) shows the smooth contour lines of the image
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Most of the images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are based on curves, especially the outlines of people and animals, which have almost no sharp or sudden turns. The use of curves makes these images appear solid and powerful, full of movement and change. These curves not only show the majestic style of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, but also bring a strong visual tension and sense of movement, as if giving the picture a musical rhythm. In particular, the application of S-shaped curves makes the picture more vivid. Images such as winged tigers, flying dragons, dancers dancing with long sleeves, and running carriages and horses are full of the rhythm of life, bringing infinite beauty to people. See Figures 128 and 129.

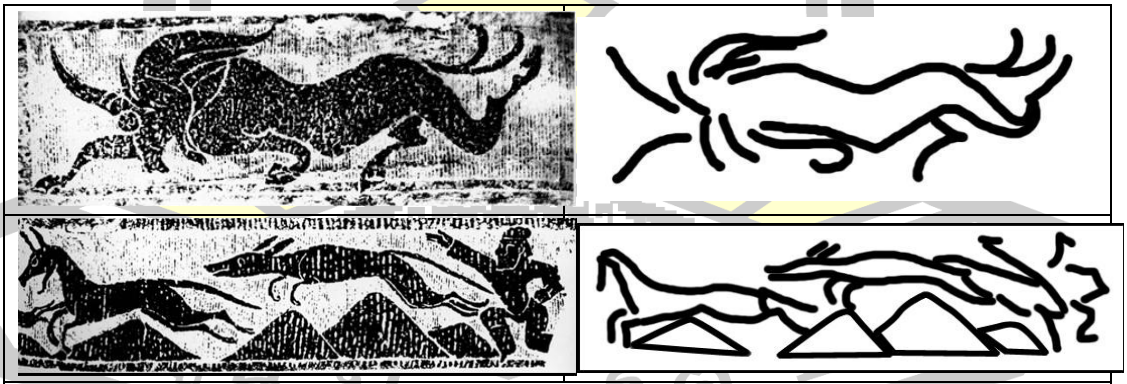

Figure 130 Extraction of Lines from Han Dynasty Stone Relief art Images
Source: Drawn by researcher (2024.08)

By extracting the lines of the Han Dynasty stone relief images (Figure 130), we can see the smooth lines in the Han Dynasty stone relief art. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Shandong ancestral halls are representative of the internal line characteristics

of the smooth texture. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Wu's Ancestral Hall in Shandong and other places are carved with fine-textured bluestone, and the images are mostly polished flat stone surfaces. Due to the influence of material and processing factors, the corresponding carving techniques and line art language are produced.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs in the Wu Family Temple in Shandong and other places are usually carved with fine-textured bluestone, and the stone surface is polished flat. This material and processing method have influenced the carving techniques and line art. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs are famous for their exquisite shapes and smooth and even lines, and mainly adopt the "flowing" white-drawing art form. Due to the limitations of stone materials, the carved lines are mostly round and even arc lines, rather than sharp turning lines, which are not inferior to the paintings of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. The traditional white-drawing technique originated from painting on paper, while the lines of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs pay more attention to the smoothness of arc lines.

4.3.3 Characteristics of image portrayal

The profound artistic impact of Han Dynasty stone reliefs owes much to their use of exaggeration and deformation, techniques that were employed with great skill and creativity. These methods of artistic treatment allowed the craftsmen to transcend the limitations of naturalistic representation, creating works that are both visually striking and emotionally expressive. In fact, when examining the history of Chinese art, the visual dynamism and imaginative distortion present in Han Dynasty reliefs are unparalleled in later periods. The artistry of exaggeration and deformation found in these works remains superior to many of the stylistic choices that emerged in subsequent centuries.

Interestingly, the methods of exaggeration and distortion that we often associate with Western modern art movements, such as Cubism and Expressionism, were already prevalent in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. These Western movements, celebrated for their departure from realistic representation and exploration of abstract forms, echo the

ancient Chinese approach of manipulating proportion and form for artistic effect. In Han Dynasty reliefs, exaggeration is most commonly seen in the disproportionate scaling of figures and objects, where certain elements are enlarged or diminished to enhance visual drama or convey symbolic meaning. Additionally, the artists employed "unconventional" techniques that allowed them to selectively distort parts of the image, creating a deliberate sense of imbalance or tension to achieve specific visual or emotional effects（Figure 131）.

The application of these artistic techniques in Han stone reliefs reveals the extraordinary aesthetic sensibility and expressive capability of the craftsmen. Through exaggeration and deformation, they were able to introduce a range of artistic contrasts, such as the juxtaposition of roughness and delicacy, hardness and softness, and the interplay between large and small forms. The tension between straight and curved lines further adds to the dynamic quality of the compositions, creating an intricate balance that draws the viewer’s eye across the entire surface.

Figure 131 "Game Picture" (rubbing) shows the exaggerated and deformed images in the Han Dynasty stone relief art

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

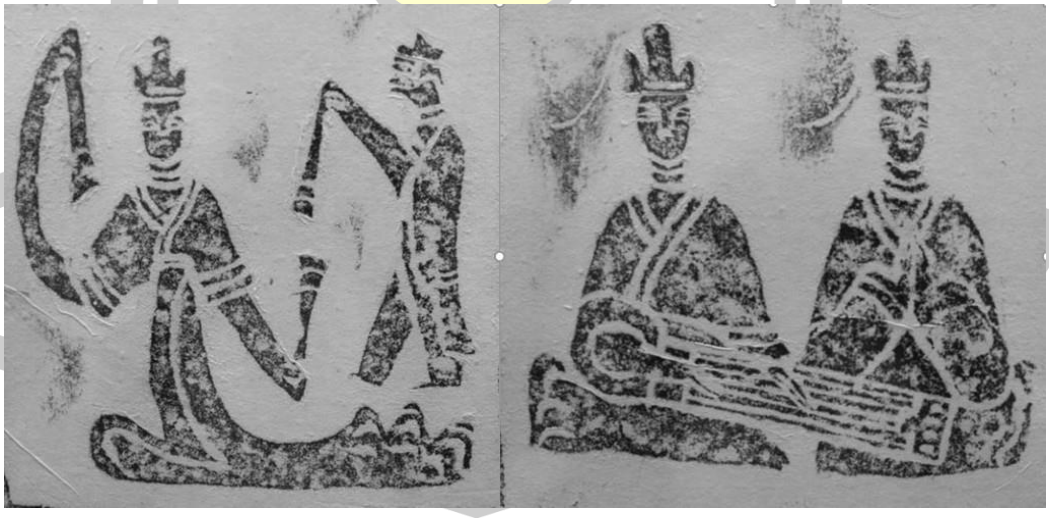

Figure 132 "Enjoying Music" (rubbing) shows the exaggerated and deformed images in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

"Enjoying Music" (figure 132) shows a typical deformed beauty of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In this work, the figures are deliberately exaggerated and deformed, especially the body proportions and postures, which reflects the flexible treatment of forms by Han Dynasty artists when depicting figures.

Specifically, the figure's body is elongated, the limbs appear particularly slender, while the face and torso are relatively small. This exaggerated treatment is not for the pursuit of realistic effects, but to create a specific artistic expression visually, emphasizing the figure's demeanor and movements. This kind of deformed beauty makes the figure show a dynamic and vital posture in the static picture, and also gives the picture a unique sense of rhythm and formal beauty.

This deformed beauty reflects the subjective re-creation of natural forms by Han Dynasty artists and embodies an artistic pursuit that transcends reality, aiming to enhance visual impact and artistic expression through deformation and exaggeration.

Analysis and summary

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty not only demonstrates extremely high artistic value in terms of composition, lines and modeling, but also realizes these artistic expressions on hard stone, fully demonstrating the superb skills and unique creativity of the Han Dynasty craftsmen. On stone, a material that is not easy to operate, they endowed stone with life with precise carving skills and rich imagination, making it an important carrier of Han Dynasty culture. The unique beauty of this artistic form not only had extremely high value at the time, but also provided important inspiration and reference for artistic creation in later generations.

4.4 The Content and implied meaning in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty

4.4.1 The beauty of everyday life

The scenes of family life are common in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, showing strong family affection and family values. The scenes of family members together, such as ancestor worship, banquets, and labor, symbolize the harmony of the

family and the bond of family affection. These scenes reflect the importance that Han Dynasty society attached to family ethics and family unity.

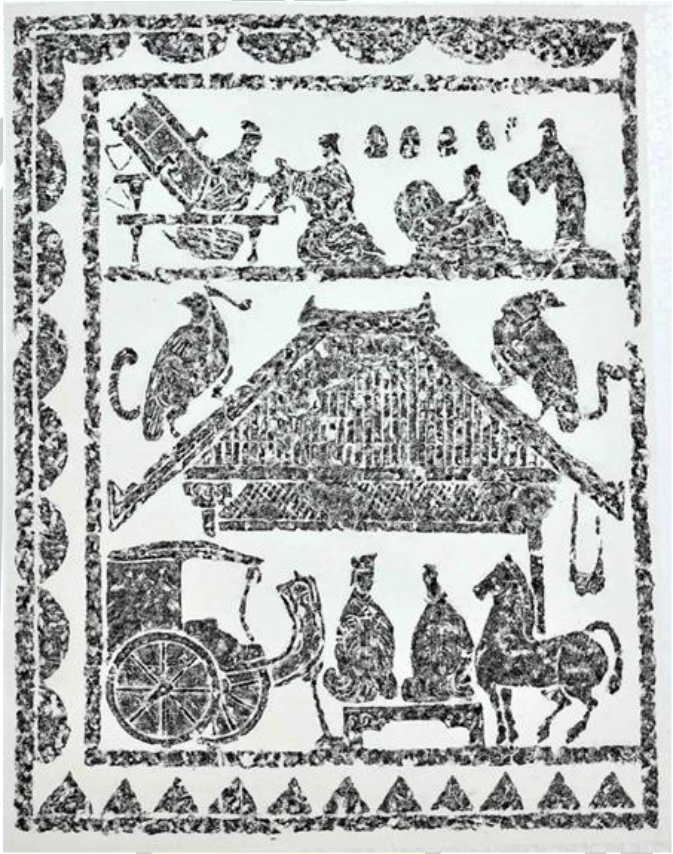

Figure 133 Rubbing of "Textile Picture" from the Han Dynasty
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The Weaving Picture (Figure 133) depicts a weaving scene, with four women busy adjusting and spinning the yarn. They skillfully operate the loom, winding the yarn into neat balls and hanging them under the weaving ram. This scene vividly reproduces the daily hard work of women in the Han Dynasty. In the social division of labor, women shouldered important responsibilities in weaving and housework. In the picture, a weaver girl even turned around and picked up her baby while working, preparing to feed her at the loom. This detail not only shows the hard work and busyness of women's labor, but also reflects their important role in the family, taking into account the dual responsibilities of work and childcare.

The two phoenixes on the pavilion are auspicious objects, symbolizing good luck and happiness. This detail contains the Han people's pursuit of a better life and their belief in auspicious symbols. As a spiritual bird in traditional culture, the phoenix gives the whole work a deeper meaning, suggesting that this building and the people in it will be protected and blessed. The human labor and the wind bird representing the gods of heaven form a harmonious picture, which also reflects the spirit of "harmony between man and nature" advocated by Taoists in the Han Dynasty.

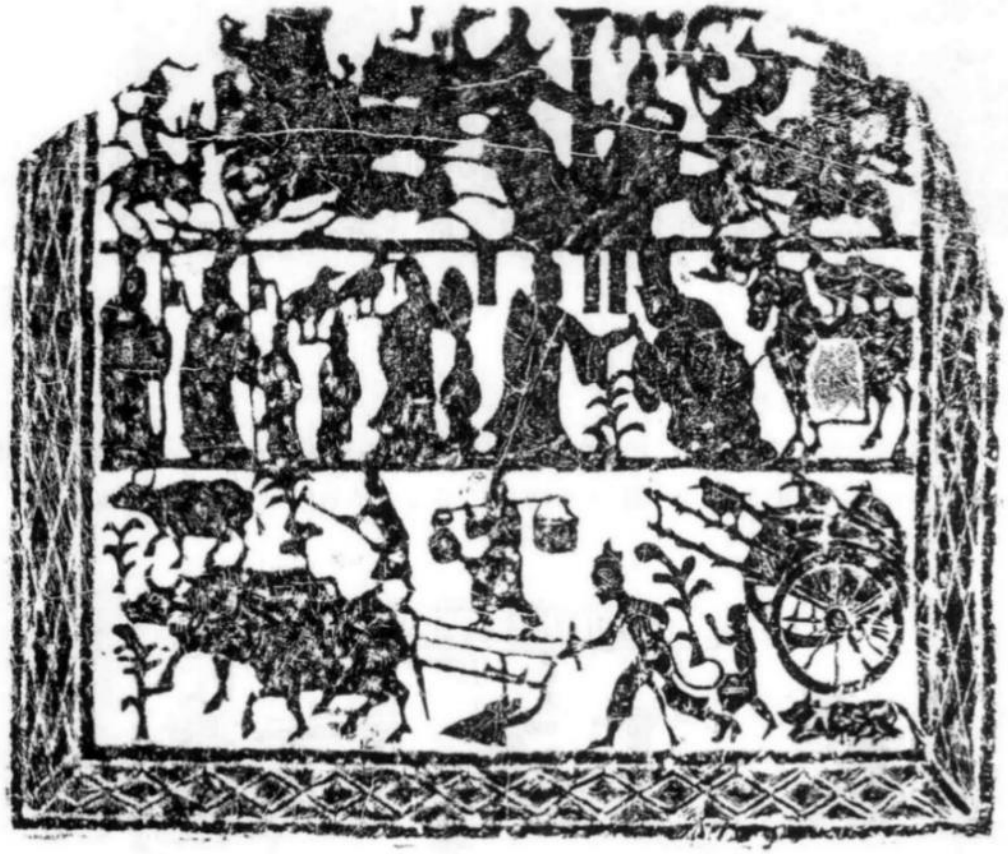

Figure 134 Oxen Ploughing (rubbing) Reinforces the importance of family ties
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

From this painting "Oxen Plowing" (Figure 134), we can see that the bottom layer of the picture depicts a typical agricultural production scene. In the picture, two strong

oxen are pulling the plow, and the farmer is holding the plow handle steadily, plowing in a field. This scene truly reproduces the daily labor of the agricultural society in the Han Dynasty and shows the close connection between farmers and the land. Following closely behind is a child, who is following the farmer and carefully sowing seeds. This detail not only shows the continuity and sense of order in farming, but also implies that agricultural knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Children start to participate in agricultural labor from an early age, which is the continuation and guarantee of the family's livelihood in the future. In addition, another family member is delivering food and water to the working farmer. This depiction of life details vividly shows the supporting role of the family in agricultural production and strengthens the importance of family ties.

The upper part of the painting depicts mythological scenes such as immortals riding deer and deer driving cloud chariots. This part is full of mystery and fantasy, symbolizing the yearning for gods and fairyland. In the Han Dynasty, images of immortals and mythical beasts were often used to decorate tombs or other religious places to express good wishes for the afterlife and the desire for eternal life. The scene of immortals riding deer not only adds a mythological color to the whole painting, but also reflects the Han people's pursuit of the idea of "harmony between man and nature" .

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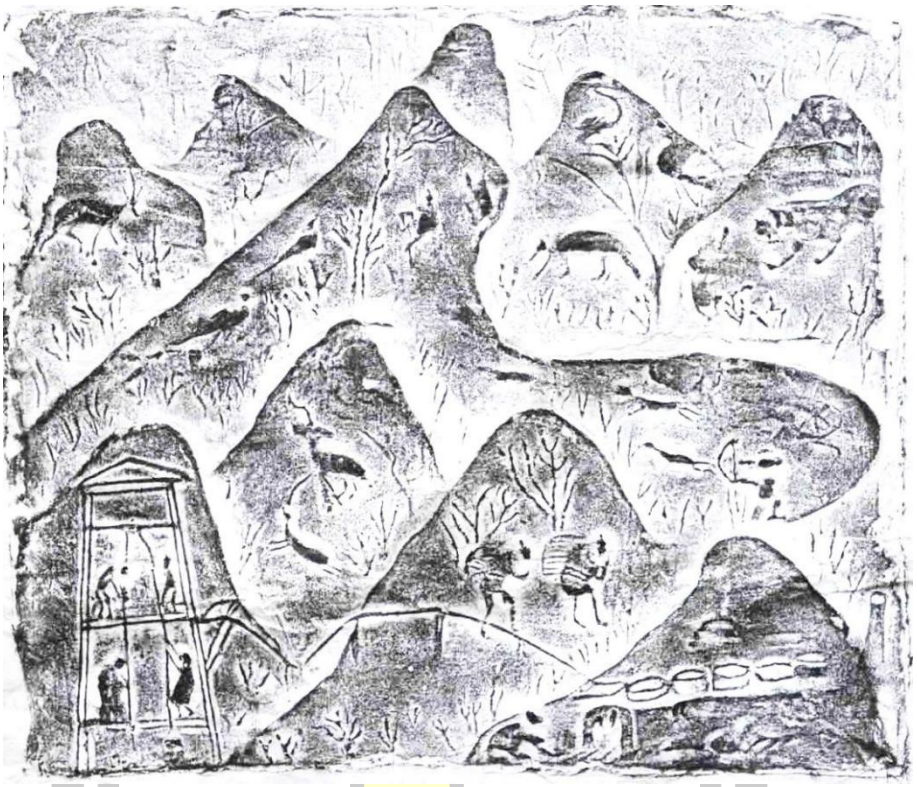

Figure 135 Salt Well (rubbing) reflects the harmonious coexistence of people and nature in the Han Dynasty

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The salt industry was very developed during the Han Dynasty and was one of the three major sources of tax revenue for the Han government. The well salt in Sichuan was well-known throughout the country.

From the painting "Salt Well" (Fig. 135), we can see that there are birds and animals in the mountains. In the near distance, a well frame stands tall, and there is a high wooden frame. The wooden frame is divided into two layers, and two people stand on each layer. These two people are pulling up the bucket full of salt water and pouring the salt water into the salt basin, and then flowing into the salt boiling tank through the bamboo tube. On the mountain road, two people are carrying salt bags to transport the boiled salt.

The painting depicts not only wild animals but also human activities. Animals in the mountains and forests and human activities appear in the same painting, suggesting

the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. This also reflects the importance that people in the Han Dynasty attached to the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

Figure 136 Image of shooting birds through trees 1 (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

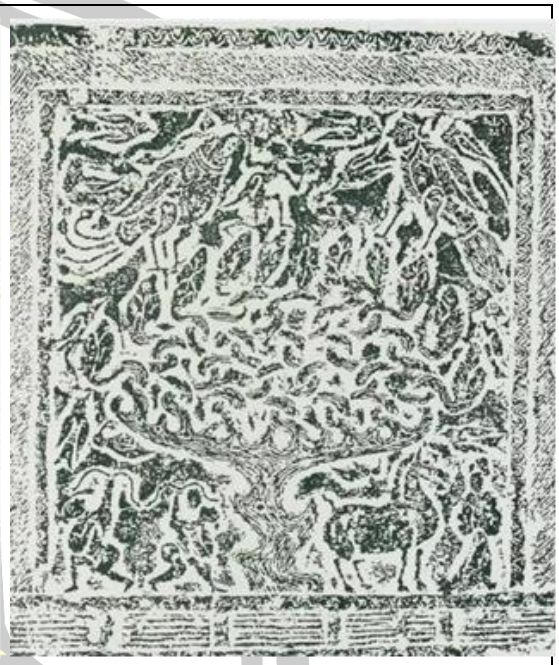

Figure 137 Image of shooting birds through trees 2 (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The images of shooting birds on trees in the stone reliefs and stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are quite meaningful (figure 136and figure 137). Currently, there are more than 40 of them, mainly distributed in Shandong, northern Jiangsu, northern Anhui, northern Shaanxi in the Yellow River Basin, and Nanyang and Sichuan in the Yangtze River Basin. The images of shooting birds on trees in Nanyang District are mostly seen in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in the middle and late Western Han Dynasty, while the images in Shandong, northern Jiangsu, northern Anhui and other places mostly appear in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty in tombs and ancestral halls in the middle and late Eastern Han Dynasty. The basic composition of the images of shooting birds on trees includes trees, birds (or monkeys) on trees, and people shooting birds. Over time, these images gradually incorporate more elements, such as monkeys, horses and carriages, and the number of people shooting birds also increases, making

the images more complex. By constantly enriching these images, the people of the Han Dynasty reflected their understanding and values of life. The Taoist desire for immortality and the Confucian concept of life continuation constitute the ideological basis of these images, which usually have the meaning of shooting nobles and marquises.

4.4.2 The Beauty of an Ideal World

Figure 138 " Cowherd and Weaver Girl " (rubbing) symbolizes the Han people's yearning for love

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The Han Dynasty relief stone of "Cowherd and Weaver Girl" unearthed in Baitan, Wolong District, Nanyang in 1935 (Figure 138) shows a white tiger with its head raised and mouth open, running. Above the tiger, three stars are connected horizontally, which should be the Cangsu in the Seven Mansions of the Western Palace. A rabbit is carved on the upper left side of the painting, and seven stars are connected around the rabbit, which is the Bi in the Seven Mansions of the Western Palace, showing the auspicious astronomical phenomenon of "the moon is separated from Bi". In the lower left corner of the painting, four stars are connected to form a quadrilateral, and there is a woman kneeling in the side, which should be the Wu girl in the Seven Mansions of Xuanwu. On the right side of the painting, a man is carved with the Cowherd, and above the Cow, three stars are connected horizontally, which should be the Altair.

Figure 139 " Altair and Weaver Girl " (rubbing) It symbolizes the Han people's yearning for love.

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Figure 139 in the collection of the Xuzhou Han Dynasty Relief Stone Art Museum features a unique composition pattern that distinguishes it from other reliefs of the same period. Unlike the more literal depictions found in many Han Dynasty reliefs, this piece uses symbolic techniques to represent the story of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl, a popular legend in Chinese folklore about star-crossed lovers separated by the Milky Way. Rather than depicting the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl as human figures, the relief employs abstract elements, such as astrological symbols and phoenixes, to allude to the characters and their story. This symbolic approach imbues the artwork with a sense of mysticism and subtlety, relying on celestial imagery to convey the narrative. Because of its implicit and abstract nature, the relief can be difficult for viewers to interpret, and many people may not immediately recognize its hidden meaning. The absence of the traditional human forms in favor of astrological signs and mythological creatures like the phoenix suggests a deeper, more metaphorical portrayal of the famous lovers' story, emphasizing the cosmic and divine forces that govern their fate. The composition invites contemplation and interpretation, offering a more esoteric reflection of the legend. This makes the relief not only a work of art but also a rich cultural artifact that encapsulates the Han Dynasty's aesthetic values and the sophisticated ways in which mythology and astronomy were intertwined in their artistic

representations.

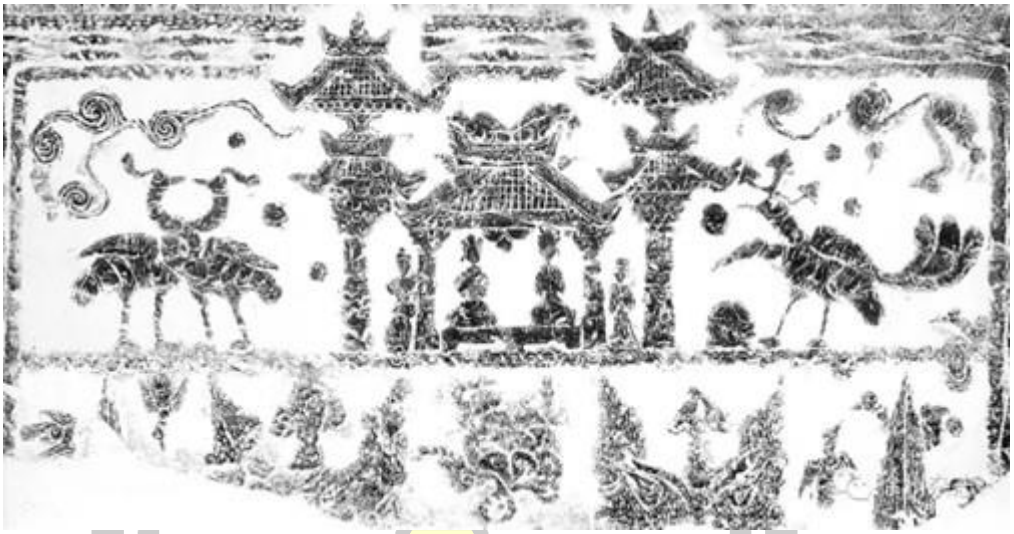

Figure 140 The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl meet , which implies the Taoist idea of “harmony between man and nature”

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

This painting, “The Meeting of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl” (figure 140), was unearthed from a small tomb in Zhangxu, Suining County. In the center of the painting is a pair of gatehouses towering into the sky, symbolizing the legendary “Gate of Heaven” or “Sky Gate”. This description echoes the “Sky Gate” in the myth of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl, symbolizing the crossing of the Milky Way that separates the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl.

On the right side of the painting, the image of the Weaver Girl is drawn. However, the image of the Weaver Girl is not specifically depicted in the painting, but she is symbolized by the three connected stars of the Weaver constellation. The hoopoe below the constellation represents the "weaving bird", which cleverly symbolizes the existence of the Weaver Girl. On the left side of the sky, the three connected "Hegu Stars" and the intertwined phoenixes symbolize the reunion and happiness of the couple, implying the plot of the meeting of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl, and praising free love. At the same time, it also embodies the Taoist idea of "harmony between man and nature", showing the integration of mythology and reality in Han Dynasty art. The

images of the Emperor of Heaven and gods are often seen in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, reflecting the importance of religious beliefs by the Han people, symbolizing the worship of gods and the awe of the order of the universe.

Figure 141 " Portrait of the Immortal Turtle " (rubbing) shows the idea of "harmony between man and nature"

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Images of immortals are also common in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, symbolizing the pursuit of immortality and the ideal of transcending the mundane world. Immortals are usually depicted holding lotus flowers, riding cranes or tigers, symbolizing their extraordinary status and immortal life.

As a mythical animal connecting heaven and earth, the tortoise bears the power of harmony between heaven and earth. The immortal riding on the tortoise's back symbolizes that he has mastered the balance and harmony of heaven and earth, further emphasizing the idea of "harmony between man and nature", which is also the core

concept of Taoist thought in the Han Dynasty.

Figure 142 Fish Cart (rubbing) shows the idea of "harmony between man and nature"

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The painting (figure 142) mainly shows a boat, people, and fish and other creatures around it, symbolizing the place of human beings in nature and the universe. The boat represents the journey of life, while the fish and water symbolize the natural world and the source of life. The fish surrounding the boat embody the harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature, reflecting the concept of "harmony between man and nature", that is, human beings and nature are closely related and must coexist.

The image of fish symbolizes the reproduction of life, and water represents the source of life. These elements combined may express the concept of the cycle of life and death. This is consistent with the idea of "harmony between man and nature", emphasizing the continuous integration and cycle of life and nature.

Overall, this Han Dynasty stone relief depicts the intrinsic connection between humans, nature and the universe through symbolic scenes, reflecting the Han people's understanding of life, death and cosmic order. The Han Dynasty stone relief art was deeply influenced by the idea of "harmony between man and nature", emphasizing the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. When depicting the interaction between people and nature, it not only shows the daily labor at that time, but also reveals the

dependence and coexistence between man and nature. This concept is deeply rooted in the cultural background of the Han Dynasty, reflecting the high degree of fit and interdependence between man and nature.

Figure 143 The images of Sunbird and Constellation (rubbings) show the Han people's pursuit of natural beauty.

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

Han Dynasty relief stones often have images of the sun and the moon. The sun is usually depicted as a circle with light, symbolizing brightness and vitality; the moon often appears in the form of a crescent, symbolizing femininity and tranquility. This image of the sun and the moon shining together reflects the observation and worship of the Han people on the laws of the movement of the sun and the moon. Some Han Dynasty relief stones are also engraved with patterns of stars and constellations, showing the Han people's observation of the night sky and their interest in astrology. In particular, the Big Dipper often appears as an important celestial symbol, symbolizing guidance. The " Sunbird and Constellation Portrait""(figure143) in the Nanyang Han Dynasty painting depicts the Sunbird flying in the sky with the sun on its back, and the Big Dipper is engraved on the right. These images are full of decorative meanings, symbolizing the vigorous vitality and spiritual charm of the Han Dynasty (Mao Na, 2014, p177-180).

In addition, star gods also play an important role in Han Dynasty mythology. Images depicting star gods often appear in Han Dynasty relief stones. These star gods represent specific constellations and celestial phenomena, and are accompanied by various mythological stories, reflecting the mysterious worship of the starry sky by the Han people. Natural phenomena such as wind, rain, thunder, and lightning are often

depicted in Han Dynasty relief stones, which not only show the Han people's observation of nature, but also reflect their awe and mythological interpretation of these phenomena. The cloud pattern symbolizes the changes in clouds in the sky, adding a sense of dynamics to the image, reflecting the Han people's pursuit of natural beauty (Hao Ming, 2017, p.73-74).

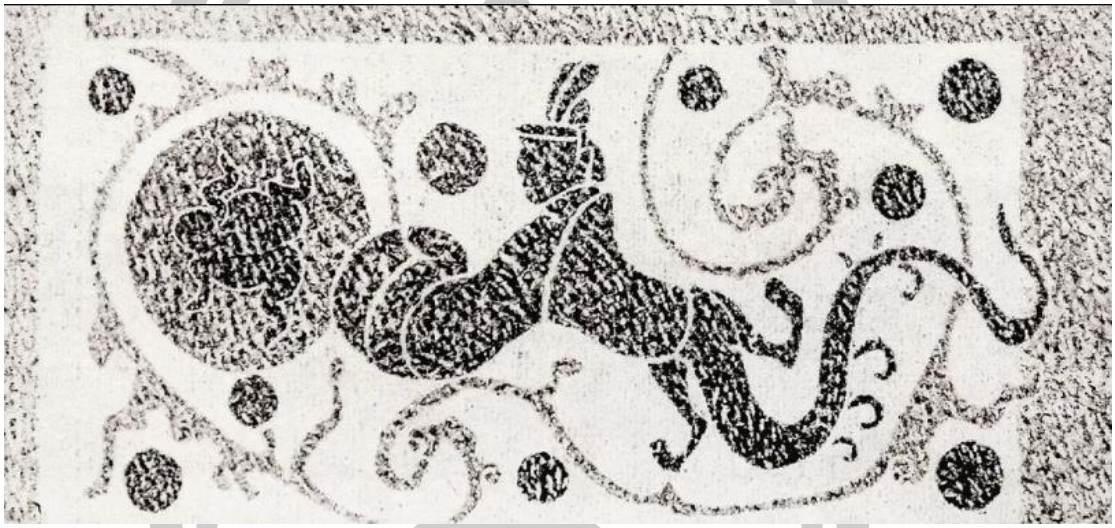

Figure 144" Chang'e Flying to the Moon " (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The "Chang'e Flying to the Moon" "(figure144) in Nanyang Han Dynasty Painting vividly depicts an ancient and beautiful mythological story on bluestone. Above the painting is a bright full moon with a toad in the moon. Chang'e has a unique image. She has a human head and a snake body, with a high bun on her head and a long dress with wide sleeves. She is flying to the moon, surrounded by clouds and nine stars twinkling in the sky. "Huainanzi" records that Houyi's wife Heng'e (i.e. Chang'e) stole the immortality medicine given to Houyi by the Queen Mother of the West, and thus flew to the moon. This story not only shows women's desire for independence and freedom in a male-dominated society, but also symbolizes mankind's pursuit of transcending reality and pursuing infinite dreams in the spiritual world. Through the detailed depiction of Chang'e's flying, this painting conveys the Han people's reverence for myths and legends and their yearning for eternal life.

Analysis and summary

The depiction of daily life scenes in Han Dynasty stone relief art, such as weaving and farming, emphasizes the harmony of family and society. Women are portrayed as the core of the family in these scenes, and they must participate in labor and take care of childcare. This detailed depiction of family life reflects the high importance that Han Dynasty society attached to family ethics. Elements that symbolize auspiciousness and happiness, such as phoenixes and oxen, are added to daily life scenes, implying people's pursuit of a better life. This auspicious symbol not only enriches the beauty of the picture, but also deepens the meaning of the work. Han Dynasty stone relief art often expresses the yearning for an ideal world through mythological stories and symbolic images. For example, the story of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl embodies the praise of free love, while images such as the immortal riding a deer and the divine turtle symbolize the pursuit of immortality and transcendence. Through these symbolic elements, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only express an ideal surreal world, but also express people's reflection and sustenance on real life. The concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature is displayed through the Han Dynasty stone relief art, emphasizing the interaction and dependence between man and nature, as well as the importance of complying with the laws of nature. This ecological view is not only an important part of Han Dynasty culture, but also provides valuable visual and ideological resources for future generations to understand ancient Chinese ecological philosophy.

4.5 Artistic characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs

4.5.1 Magnificent style

The vigorous atmosphere of the times The Han Dynasty was established and ruled for more than 400 years. Most of the time, the country was strong, and the society was stable. As a microcosm of this distinctive era, the portrait art of the Han Dynasty also fully demonstrated the strong, confident and vigorous atmosphere of the times. This is the unique feeling of deep, heavy, rough, bold, powerful and dynamic that the portrait

art of the Han Dynasty brings us. Reading the portrait art of the Han Dynasty, we can see that under the smooth, simple and fast brushstrokes, whether it is traveling by car and horse, animals, or historical figures, immortals and gods, from layout to lines, from body to dynamics, all have a heavy force and a sense of ancient vicissitudes. Even in the scenes of singing and dancing such as rural hunting, manor feasts, and ascension to the auspiciousness of the immortals, the moment of rapid movement captured by the portraits of the Han Dynasty is static on the surface, but contains powerful movement, power and momentum inside. This is the special charm that a strong and confident era gives to art (Tang Wei, 2018, p.131-132). "The wind rises and the clouds fly, my power spreads across the country and I return to my hometown. Where can I find brave men to guard the four sides!" Liu Bang, singing "The Great Wind Song", held a three-foot sword and established the powerful Han Empire, a unified, multi-ethnic, centralized state. At that time, China's mathematics and astronomy were absolutely leading in the world, and its medicine and geography were also superior to other countries in the world. There were endless creations and inventions, clear politics, prosperous agriculture, abundant materials and technological progress. The country prospers and the culture flourishes. As the Han Dynasty was in its heyday, culture and art also flourished. The "grandness" in the material sense, such as the large palace, the large mausoleum, and the large territory, accompanied the majestic momentum in the spiritual level, such as grandeur, generosity, broadness and tolerance. The art of the Han Dynasty seemed to have incorporated the simplicity, depth, grandeur and broadness of "The Great Wind Song" (Song Guangwei, 1994, p.12-16).

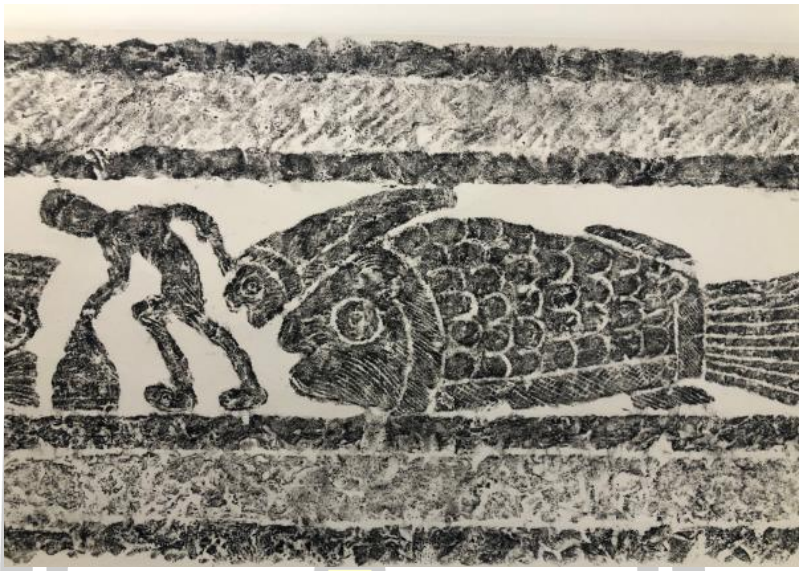

Figure 145 Part of "Fishing" (rubbing) shows the beauty of magnificent in Han Dynasty stone relief art

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty focused on the image's overall appearance and movement rules and ignored the details of the image"(figure145). Some people think that the image creation of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is a bit rough and the modeling techniques are a bit clumsy. In fact, it is because they do not understand the guiding ideology of the Han Dynasty's artistic creation of "being careful in appearance but losing the appearance", and do not understand that this is an artistic treatment method that combines cleverness with clumsiness. Therefore, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty often give people a sense of naivety and simplicity without the smell of makeup.

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Figure 146 Han Dynasty stone relief depicting drumming (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

This Nanyang Han Dynasty stone relief "Jian Drum Dance"(figure146) is a typical example of the ingenious combination of roughness and refinement. There is a drum on the left side of the picture, and someone on the left is playing Cuju and dancing, while the person on the right is also stepping forward to play Cuju and beat the drum. At first glance, this work, especially the image on the right, seems rough and clumsy. But if you look closely, you will find that this painting is like the folk artist who created it, revealing exquisiteness in its roughness and showing heroism in its simplicity, giving people a feeling of great skill and simplicity. Whether it is the dancer or the musician, the image is extremely concise, and the dancer's limbs and torso are the same thickness, just like the lines of calligraphy. Although "Jian Drum Dance" is concise, it vividly shows the lively scene of the fusion of dance and music. It is a typical work in the Nanyang Han Dynasty stone relief that ingeniously expresses the beauty of roughness, especially its exaggerated shape and powerful lines, presenting a simple and honest artistic style.

4.5.2 Romantic style

The culture of the Han Dynasty showed great tolerance and diversity, especially in the fields of ideology and literature and art, which was deeply influenced by Chu culture. Han Dynasty romanticism dominated the aesthetic trend of the time, and this romantic sentiment was fully expressed in the Han Dynasty mural art. Through the Han

Dynasty murals, we can see a world where fantasy and reality are highly integrated: mythological elements such as gods, auspicious signs, exotic flowers and plants are intertwined with the luxurious life of the nobles and the hard work of the lower classes in reality; the stars in the sky, historical figures and stories, and real beliefs and wars are cleverly integrated into it. Artists show scenes such as seeking immortality, sacrifice, feasting, hunting, harvesting, and smelting one by one, depicting vivid pictures of horses galloping, cows running, birds flying, and fish leaping. People and gods coexist, and the atmosphere is magnificent. The artist's thinking transcends the constraints of time and space, presenting us with a romantic world full of extraordinary vitality and vigorous life (Chen Jiali, 2007, p.206-208).

The social thought and lifestyle of the Han Dynasty were more open than those of the later feudal society, and the ruling ideology was not simply "Confucianism as the only doctrine", but a fusion of multiple thought systems to form a diverse cultural structure. The culture of the Han Dynasty was deeply influenced by the Chu culture, and its romanticism was fully displayed in art. Han Fu is famous for its gorgeous rhetoric, while Han Li is famous for its broad character shapes and sense of rhythm. This romantic quality is also reflected in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty not only reflect the enthusiasm and imagination of the Han people for life, but also show their reverence for nature and mysterious forces. It is this spirit of romance and freedom that makes the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty occupy a unique position in the history of ancient Chinese art and become a cultural treasure that has attracted the attention of later generations.

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Figure 147 rubbingthe picture of mythical beasts and immortals(rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The astronomical image of Nanyang Han Dynasty painting " Divine Beasts and Immortals " (Figure 147) is engraved on the top of the tomb, symbolizing the universe in the hearts of the Han people. The Qilingang Han Tomb pushed the astronomical images of Nanyang Han Dynasty paintings to the peak. The tomb top portrait is composed of six stones, among which the images of divine beasts and gods show the extreme romanticism of the Han people. Nanyang originally belonged to the Chu area, and the romantic sentiment of Chu culture is reflected in the Han Dynasty stone relief art. The images are sparse, unrestrained and ethereal, giving people rich imagination space. With its unique romantic charm, the Nanyang Han Dynasty stone reliefs show vivid and comfortable images and rhythmic lines, reflecting the realm of "vivid and lively" pursued by traditional Chinese painters.

Analysis and summary

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty shows its unique cultural depth through the use of symbols and allegory and conveys rich ideological connotations with the help of specific image symbols. This art form shows a grand and majestic momentum, reflecting the lofty ambitions and broad minds of the people of the Han Dynasty. This momentum is not only reflected in the scale and layout of the works, but also in its magnificent content. Artists pay attention to harmony in their creations, and their works often present a romantic style, successfully achieving the artistic effect of blending

scenes, making the pictures both realistic and vivid, and full of ideal beauty.

Summary

This chapter systematically divides the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty into three levels: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content, through Mr. Ye Lang's aesthetic concept, and conducts in-depth research. First, the study reveals the superb skills of Han Dynasty craftsmen in stone selection, tool use and technical application, and demonstrates the material basis and production process of Han Dynasty stone relief. Secondly, through the analysis of composition form, line expression and modeling techniques, the diversity and complexity of the composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs are explored, especially the unique visual effects of layered composition and screen partition composition. Finally, the study deeply interprets the thoughts and cultural connotations carried by Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and shows its profound implications in expressing daily life, ideal world and harmonious coexistence between man and nature. This hierarchical analysis method not only reveals the complexity and multi-level nature of Han Dynasty stone relief art, but also provides important inspiration for contemporary art creation, especially in the innovation of composition techniques and the expression of cultural connotations, encouraging artists to achieve new artistic breakthroughs in the integration of technology and culture. At the same time, the research in this chapter has laid an important foundation for the research in subsequent chapters.

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CHAPTER V

The artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation

Introduction

Chinese contemporary art has been on the historical stage since 1978. After three eras of reflection and transcendence, marketization and political pop, and globalization and diversification, it has now entered the new socialist era. With the stabilization of China's social and political environment, the strong political protest and social criticism in the past are no longer common in art. As the government's control over art becomes more standardized, artistic creation has become more moderate in terms of theme and form. The Chinese government supports the development of Chinese contemporary art through various cultural policies and funds, encouraging artists to draw inspiration from traditional culture and innovate. This policy orientation has led to a more diversified Chinese contemporary art, no longer simply pursuing the avant-garde nature of art, but exploring contemporary art expressions with Chinese characteristics. Chinese contemporary art has gradually found its own artistic context for development and has begun to return to the exploration and innovation of localization, seeking nourishment from Chinese traditional culture. With the protection and display of Han Dynasty stone relief art, this traditional Chinese art treasure has begun to enter the vision of Chinese contemporary artists, and its profound aesthetics has had a significant artistic impact on Chinese contemporary art creation. This chapter aims to reveal the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs on contemporary art creation and explore its reinterpretation in the context of contemporary art.

5.1 Elaboration of the concept of Artistic Influence

5.1.1 Definition of the concept of art

As a concept, "art" is a concept that has been generated historically along with the rich and long artistic practice of mankind and has obvious process characteristics. In his book Keywords: Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Williams briefly sorted out its past and present in English and made necessary explanations on the process of its transformation from being associated with practical skills to a modern concept (Williams, 2005, p-17-20). In terms of etymology, the word "art" originally referred to skills in a broader sense. From ancient Greece, the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, it is not difficult to find that as a word, practical skills and non-practical art are not completely distinguished here. It was not until 1746 that the French aesthetician Barthes used the concept of "fine art" for the first time. The definition of "fine" clearly shows the difference between art and various "non-beautiful" skills. This means that artistic activities will eventually become a truly independent value field, which will not only distinguish artists with genius and creativity from ordinary craftsmen at the practical level, but also become an important knowledge field that people need to study independently at the theoretical level. (Williams, 2005, p17-20) As a term, art has thus acquired a modern meaning that is different from other human social activities. This point was also clearly stated by Collingwood in his book Principles of Art: "By the late 18th century, this separation had become increasingly evident, to the point where the distinction between fine arts and practical arts was established; here, 'fine' art does not refer to fine or highly skilled art, but to 'beautiful' art. By the 19th century, this phrase was finally compressed and summarized into art by removing adjectives that indicate qualities and replacing the plural form that indicates the whole with the singular form. (Collingwood, 1985, p7) "

Aristotle emphasized that the real world imitated by art is real, and art that imitates the real world is also real. What is particularly important is that art's imitation of reality is not simply a passive copy of the original. Art's imitation of real life has its own

characteristics: First, art is more beautiful than reality. Art is not only a passive copy of reality, but also an active reproduction of reality. This reproduced reality is more beautiful than the reality imitated. Second, artistic creation reproduces "what should be." As he said in "Poetics": Since the poet is an imitator like the painter or other image maker, then at any time, he must choose the object of imitation from the following three: (a) things in the past or present, (b) things in legends or assumptions, and (c) things that should be this or that (Aristotle, 1996, p117).

In short, starting from ancient Greece, Western art has always emphasized the true reproduction of the real world. This "imitation theory" has had a far-reaching influence in various historical periods, revealing the close connection between art and reality. After the Renaissance, new artistic concepts such as the "mirror theory" emerged. Although there were changes, the basic idea of imitating reality continued. In modern times, with social changes, the concept of art gradually shifted from reproducing reality to expressing inner spirit. Especially in romanticism, impressionism and modernism, art is more regarded as a special way to express emotions and the spiritual world.

5.1.2 Definition of the concept of artistic influence

This study adopts the concept of artistic influence, which is used to describe the influence of one art form, work, artist or genre on other art forms, works, artists or genres. This concept involves many aspects such as artistic creation, art dissemination, and art reception. However, there is currently no clear single source or specific scholar who has proposed the specific concept of "artistic influence". This concept has gradually formed and been widely accepted in the development of art history and aesthetic research. Heinrzhich Wölfflin: In "Basic Concepts of Art History", he proposed a comparative analysis of different styles in art history and explored the mutual influence between different art styles. Harold Bloom: In "The Anxiety of Influence", Bloom explored the influence relationship between literary works. Although it mainly focuses on the field of literature, its theoretical framework can also be applied to the field of art.

Saleh, B., Abe, K., Arora, RS, & Elgammal, A. (2016). Toward automated discovery of artistic influence. *Multimedia Tools* used the concept of "artistic influence" in this paper. By studying the similarities of artists' paintings, the problem of automatically discovering the influence between artists through multimedia was discussed and significant results were achieved (Saleh, B., Abe, K., Arora, RS, & Elgammal , 2016) .

Wenfeng Chen pointed out in the article "The Application of Landscape Elements in Five Dynasties Flower and Bird Painting and Its Artistic Influence" that artistic influence can be reflected in many aspects, including technical methods, theme selection, style characteristics, expression forms and ideological connotations. Artistic influence can transcend time and space, such as the inspiration of ancient art on modern art, or the mutual influence between different cultures. It can be direct and obvious, such as imitating or borrowing the artistic style of others, or it can be indirect and subtle, by influencing the creative thinking or perception of artists (Wenfeng Chen, 2024, pp. 5-6).

Cui Wenjun pointed out in his article " A Study on the Influence of Digital Technology on New Media Art " that artistic influence is an important driving force for the evolution and development of art, reflecting the important role of artistic influence. (Cui Wenjun., 2013, p. 67)

Li Hanfei and Yang Jing's article, "On the Inevitability of the Influence of Russian Oil Painting Art on Oil Painting Creation in Heilongjiang Province from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication" points out that one kind of cultural art can have a profound and far-reaching artistic influence on another kind of cultural art, especially in terms of artistic concepts. (Li Hanfei & Yang Jing, 2023, pp. 28-30) .

In the book "Principles of Aesthetics", Ye Lang believes that the thread of Chinese traditional culture has not been broken, and Chinese traditional aesthetics has not stopped influencing current art due to the changes of the times. On the contrary, it has

changed with the development of the times and is showing vitality in new artistic forms.

It can be seen that "artistic influence" can be reflected in many aspects, including technical methods, theme selection, style characteristics, forms of expression, and ideological connotations. Artistic influence can transcend time and space, such as the inspiration of ancient art on modern art, or the mutual influence between different cultures. It can be direct and obvious, such as imitating or borrowing the artistic style of others, or it can be indirect and subtle, by influencing the creative thinking or perception of artists. Artistic influence is an important driving force for the evolution and development of art, reflecting the role of art as a medium of cultural exchange and dissemination in society, history, and culture.

5.2 Overview of Chinese Contemporary Art

5.2.1 Definition of Chinese Contemporary Art

"Contemporary" was originally a concept of historical periodization. In the West, the history after the French Revolution in 1789 is called the Contemporary Age. In China, the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is regarded as the starting point of contemporary history. However, in the history of art, whether in the West or in China, the use of the concept of "Contemporary Art" has no connection with historical periodization. In other words, as a time boundary, the division of contemporary art and contemporary history is not the same. In Western art history writings, "1945, the end of World War II", "the 1960s" and "the 1980s" have all been identified as the starting points of contemporary art. In his book Contemporary Art, the British art critic Julian Stallabrass found a time point for contemporary art: 1989, because that year and the series of major world events that followed it—German reunification, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the signing of global trade agreements—brought about an unprecedented era of economic globalization (Wang Duanting,2012 ,p.7)) . We should admit that 1989 was indeed an epoch-making year

for the West and the world. Therefore, in the eyes of this British critic, contemporary art is the art of the era of globalization.

However, China's development history is not synchronized with that of Western countries, so Chinese contemporary art has its own periodization standards. In recent years, Chinese art critics have basically reached a consensus on the time node of Chinese contemporary art, which is the late 1970s and early 1980s, or more precisely 1978, because in December of that year, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held, chaired by Deng Xiaoping(Figure 148), and the meeting decided to shift the focus of the party's work from "class struggle" to "economic construction." Since then, my country has entered a new historical period of reform and opening up and modernization.

Figure 148 Comrade Deng Xiaoping's speech at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee

Source: https://www.baidu.com/s?ie=utf-8&f=3&rsv_bp

Chinese contemporary art mainly refers to the art forms that have innovated, subverted the previous norms, and are avant-garde in the fields of oil painting, sculpture, printmaking, etc. after 1978, including but not limited to photography, installation , concept , behavior , video , multimedia and other new art forms .

From the perspective of time, Chinese contemporary art should be the art of the era closest to us and can reflect the humanistic spirit of the era we are experiencing. Chen Xiaojuan believes that "contemporary art can generally refer to various types of art that appear in contemporary times (Chen Xiaojuan, 2016, p.155).

In other words, contemporary art is an artistic trend that witnesses the changes of contemporary society together with contemporary people and participates in the construction of contemporary culture. It is an artistic trend with a sense of cultural mission and keen visual insight. Contemporary art is also an art that is constantly updated and leads to the future.

The development of contemporary Chinese art is closely related to China's social changes. The "Stars Art Exhibition" in 1979 is regarded as a clear mark of contemporary Chinese art. It symbolizes the creative concept of seeking freedom on the basis of truth-seeking (Zhao Ziqi, 2023, p.57-60). Contemporary Chinese artists start from the perspective of independent individuals, focus on important issues in real situations, and contribute certain cultural values to the advancement of social progress and art history through their keen experience, accurate thinking and wonderful language.

5.2.2 Classification of Chinese Contemporary Art

In his aesthetic theory work Lectures on Aesthetics, German aesthetician Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel explored the classification and development of art. Based on the existence form of artworks and the audience's perception, he divided art into time art (such as music and literature), space art (such as sculpture and painting), and time-space art (such as drama, film and television). This classification method has had a profound impact on subsequent aesthetic research.

Chinese contemporary art mainly refers to the field centered on visual art, such as painting, sculpture, installation art, video art, etc. This narrow definition and understanding stems from several historical and cultural backgrounds:

(1) Tradition of art history. In China and around the world, the word "art" has historically been mainly associated with visual art. The four essences of ancient Chinese

literati art - poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal carving, as well as the Western fine arts tradition, are mainly concentrated in the fields of visual art such as painting and sculpture. With the development of modern art, these traditional forms have been further extended and expanded, becoming the main fields of contemporary art.

(2) The influence of the art market. From the late 20th century to the early 21st century, the Chinese contemporary art market developed rapidly, especially in the international auction market, where paintings and sculptures often fetched high prices. This market-driven push has made visual art the main focus of Chinese contemporary art. Market institutions such as galleries, art fairs and auction houses are more inclined to display and trade visual art works, further strengthening the dominant position of visual art in contemporary art.

(3) The expressiveness and communication power of visual arts. Visual arts have intuitive expressiveness and are easily disseminated through exhibitions, publications and the media. Paintings, sculptures and installation art can attract audiences with direct visual impact and be displayed in a concentrated manner through exhibitions, which makes them occupy an important position in the vision of the public and the media.

(4) The influence of Western modern art. The development of Chinese contemporary art has been deeply influenced by Western modern art trends, especially in the fields of painting and sculpture. The "85 New Wave" art movement after the 1980s marked the large-scale introduction of Western modernist trends. Artists have used painting and sculpture as carriers for creation and expression. This influence continues to this day, making visual art the main form of Chinese contemporary art.

(5) Academic and critical focus: Art history, art criticism, and academic research are largely concentrated in the field of visual arts. Many studies and theoretical discussions are mainly centered around painting, sculpture, and installation art, which makes these fields more prominent in contemporary art discussions.

(6) Independent expression of comprehensive art forms. Although music, dance, and drama also belong to the category of art, they have independent development paths

and audience groups. For example, music has an independent performance market and venues, and dance and drama also have their own school systems and performance venues. These art forms have their independence in professional fields, so they are not always discussed together with "contemporary art" in the field of visual arts.

In summary, when discussing contemporary Chinese art, the focus is usually on visual art forms such as painting and sculpture, because they have a prominent position and influence in many aspects such as historical tradition, market, communication, and academic research (Long Zeju, 2023, p.123-128).

5.2.3 The development history of Chinese contemporary art

(1) Reflection and Transcendence: The New Art Movement Period in the Decade after the Cultural Revolution (1979-1989)

After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, " reform and opening up" became the main theme, and emancipating the mind was the top priority. The literary and art circles certainly became the vanguard. The first " Stars Art Exhibition" in 1979 opened the golden decade of the art circle, and the once suppressed emotions finally ushered in a thorough release. From today's perspective, the significance of the "Stars Art Exhibition" lies in questioning the rights of mainstream discourse. Perhaps the "Stars Art Exhibition" is not challenging in creation, but it is the beginning of Chinese contemporary art (Zhao Ziqi, 2023, p.57-60). "The tighter the spring is compressed, the higher it bounces." The following ten years can be regarded as true ideological liberation and freedom. Western modernist thought has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, especially the works of Picasso, Matisse, Freud and others, which have profoundly influenced that generation of young people. Now they have long become famous artists active in the painting world. There are also some localized individual explorations, such as Chen Danqing's "Tibetan Series" (Figure 149) and Luo Zhongli's "Father" (Figure 150). In the painting "Father", Luo Zhongli depicted a low-level dung picker instead of a great man. "Tibetan Series" has a total of 7 paintings. Chen Danqing tried to use the language of Western classical painting to

reproduce various fragments of Tibetan people's daily life. Under his pen, the lifelike Tibetans are no longer the original singing and dancing, stereotyped symbols, but individuals with vivid vitality and profound cultural carriers. Chen Danqing introduced his intention in the postscript of his creation: "I want people to see such a strong and rugged life on the remote plateau. If you have seen the herdsmen in the Kham area, you will definitely feel that they are real men. I see them standing in groups on the street every day, exchanging ornaments or selling butter. They have bright eyes, thick foreheads, and their braids and hanging ornaments sway when they walk. Their heavy steps are heroic and steady. They are really majestic and enviable. They are good subjects for painting from head to toe. I found a straightforward language: they are standing, and this is a painting." (Chen Danqing, 1981, p.1)

Figure 149 "Tibetan Series" Chen Danqing oil painting on canvas
Source: A Brief History of Contemporary Chinese Art, p. 221

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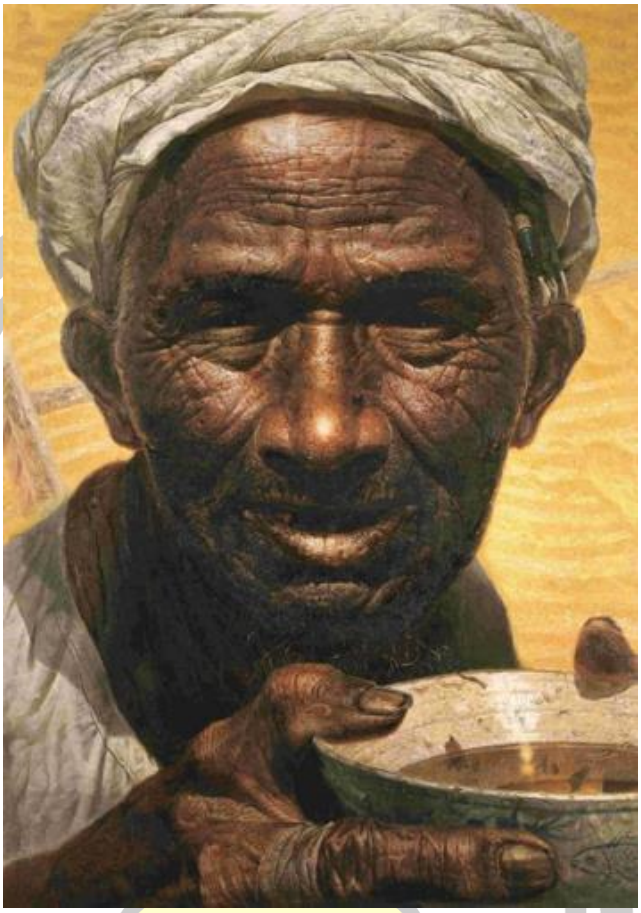

Figure 150 Father, Luo Zhongli, oil on canvas, 1980
Source: A Brief History of Contemporary Chinese Art, p. 222

The 85 Art Movement is an art movement with a strong individualistic color and anti-traditionalism as its core. It has a profound impact not only on fine arts, but also on movies and music. The 85 Art Movement is the brightest star in the literature and art of this era. It liberates the mind, breaks through the shackles, and directly seeks fresh blood from Western modern art, thus triggering a nationwide art trend and the emergence of many art groups. The 85 Art Movement emphasizes anti-traditionalism. Many artists believe that the feudal ideas, rigid aesthetic concepts and researcheritarianism contained in traditional culture have constrained artistic creation. Therefore, they break through the traditional form and content, explore new ways of artistic expression, and try to get rid of the various restrictions on artistic creation in the past.

Some artists not only break through tradition in form, but also deconstruct and criticize traditional culture in content. Through irony and ridicule, they question the unreasonable parts of traditional culture, such as feudal hierarchy and Confucian moral constraints. During this period, traditional culture was classified as "the decadent and declining thoughts of the feudal landlord class". Coupled with the serious lack of relevant education, most of the young artists who were very active during the "85 Thought Movement" had little understanding of traditional systematic knowledge and spent most of their energy on learning and digesting Western modern and contemporary knowledge. It can be said that until the late 1980s, many of them had no time and energy to take care of their own cultural traditions. (Lü Peng's "Xishan Qingyuan", published in the album of the same name and Lü Peng's "Tradition Has Just Begun", published on 99 Art Network.

(2) Marketization of Chinese Contemporary Art and the Political Pop Period (1990-2000)

1990s, China's economic system underwent a major transformation, and the market economy gradually replaced the planned economy as the dominant force. With the development of the economy, the cultural and artistic fields have also been deeply affected. Artists began to realize that art is no longer just a tool to express personal thoughts or political views, it can also become a commodity, be traded, collected, and even become an object of investment. In this context, the combination of artistic creation and the market has gradually become closer. Many artists began to explore commercial creation models and consider how to attract more audiences and buyers through their works. Their creations began to consider market needs and trends and were no longer just pure artistic expression. This change brought prosperity to the art market and also made artistic creation more diversified.

Figure 151 Wang Guangyi, “The Great Criticism - Marlboro”, oil on canvas

Source: A Brief History of Contemporary Chinese Art, p. 249

Political Pop is a style that combines political symbols and pop art. Artists express their views on social and political issues by quoting and transforming political symbols. This style was particularly popular in China in the 1990s. Artists used their works to satirize and ridicule social reality, expressing their thoughts and criticisms on social phenomena at the time. Wang Guangyi's "Big Criticism” (figure151) series is a representative of this style. He deconstructed and reorganized classic political propaganda posters and commercial advertising symbols by quoting them, forming an artistic expression with strong irony. Political Pop is an important turning point in China's modern art movement, indicating that artists have shifted from focusing on Western modern thoughts and art to focusing on the real living space of the Chinese people, using humor to dissolve the self in political complexes, thus marking the

beginning of Chinese modern art on its own path (Zhao Ziqi, 2023, p.57-60).

Cynical realism is an artistic style that expresses real life in a relaxed, playful, and even absurd way. Yue Minjun's "Smiley Face" series is a typical representative of cynical realism. He expresses ridicule and helplessness towards social phenomena by repeating the same exaggerated smiley face. Cynical realism often reveals the absurdity of social problems through humorous means, while also showing a sense of helplessness and alienation towards reality.

(3) Globalization and Diversification (2000-2011 AD)

After entering the 21st century, the process of globalization has further accelerated, and cultural exchanges and interactions between China and the world have become more frequent. During this period, Chinese contemporary art gradually stepped onto the international stage, and artists began to participate in important art activities such as international exhibitions and biennials. This is the decade in which Chinese contemporary art entered the capital market and connected with international art. The rebelliousness and avant-garde nature of the works in this decade have been weakened. With the continuous development of China's economy, the artistic expression as the superstructure will become more diversified and enriched. At the same time, our art world also needs a free space for artists to express their true feelings and ideas about the current society (Zhao Ziqi, 2023, p.57-60). The international art market has also paid unprecedented attention to Chinese contemporary art. The works of Chinese artists have repeatedly set high prices in the international auction market, attracting widespread attention around the world. From 2006 to 2008, Chinese contemporary art was even more popular in the art market, especially in the auction market, than traditional art, modern calligraphy and painting, and academic realistic painting, which once had the upper hand. For this reason, Li Feng once optimistically declared in his article: "Chinese contemporary art is becoming the fastest growing point in the auction industry and is widely valued around the world." (Li Feng, "Chinese Contemporary Art Becomes the Fastest Growing Point in the Auction Industry", published in China

Culture News, June 19, 2006, p. 002.)

Figure 152 Cai Guoqiang and his gunpowder sketch work "Nine Cars "
Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&ps

Installation art has become one of the important forms of contemporary Chinese art in the early 21st century. Different from traditional painting and sculpture, installation art focuses on the interaction between works, audiences and space, and creates works of art with strong visual impact and ideological depth through the combination of materials, spatial layout and concepts. Cai Guoqiang's gunpowder paintings and installation works (figure 152) are representative of this period. Through gunpowder explosions and installation art, he explores the collision and integration of Eastern and Western cultures.

At the beginning of the 21st century, traditional culture is no longer seen as a symbol of obsolescence and obsolescence but is re-examined as an important cultural resource. So, how should Chinese contemporary art connect with tradition and thus solve the problem of "re-Sinicization"? I remember reading a related speech by Doris Lockhart, the former wife of the famous British collector Saatchi, in the magazine "Art Finance" many years ago and was deeply impressed. In an interview with critic Zhao

Li, she said: "If Chinese contemporary art continues to imitate the West or continues to Westernize, it is wrong both in terms of concept and creation... The best things in national culture are actually the qualities that make others appreciate themselves the most." (Zhao Li, "Art is not a horse race-dialogue with collector Doris Lockhart", published in the December 2008 issue of "Art Finance") During this period, the elements of traditional culture were given new meanings and values. Artists began to integrate traditional elements with modern art techniques in their creations, exploring the combination of tradition and modernity. For example, Xu Bing borrowed traditional calligraphy forms in his "Book from the Ground" series, but replaced Chinese characters with symbols and graphics, challenging the expression of traditional language and culture. This fusion and innovation not only maintain the essence of traditional culture, but also gives it a new interpretation in modern society.

5.2.4 The Current State of Contemporary Art in China (2012-2024)

The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing in November 2012, was a very important congress held at a decisive stage when China entered the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The important judgment made was that starting from the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, socialism with Chinese characteristics entered a new era. China, which has entered a new era, has profoundly influenced the world development pattern with its ever-increasing comprehensive national strength. This global perspective has made Chinese cultural construction more aware of the uniqueness and autonomy of Chinese-style modern cultural construction in the process of constantly moving towards modernization and internationalization (Han Qingxiang & Zhang Jian, 2023, p.5-14) . The global vision of Chinese art in the new era is a method of consciously comparing the development of global art after experiencing the globalization of art. Chinese contemporary art is no longer self-enclosed, but constantly forms innovative mechanisms and explores the future space of art development in the interaction with the development of global art. However, this global comparison particularly respects

the history and traditions of the development of art of different ethnic groups and countries. It is also in this global comparison that Chinese art has explored a new path for the independent development of modernity. A clear sign is that Chinese art in the new era does not completely set its "contemporaneity" style according to the so-called globalized art model. Instead, on the basis of inheriting all the excellent traditions of China and foreign countries, it shows the modern art spirit and modern art language of a nation through the image of national rejuvenation and grand epic narratives highlighted by art and locks this modernity in the visual solidification of the national spirit with the people as the narrative subject. This is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, the resurgence of grand narratives; second, the continuous and balanced development of various categories of plastic arts; and third, the new form of aesthetic education formed by the construction of new art disciplines, the development of art museums, new exhibition mechanisms and the exploration of science and technology art. (Shang Hui, "China Literature and Art Review" No. 7, 2024)

Globalization has allowed people's lifestyles to develop within a certain range and has promoted the rise of global consciousness around the world. But behind these positive influences, there are also some worrying issues. For example, globalization may blur the connotation of local cultural values, weaken local cultural innovation capabilities, and so on. In the general trend of globalization, Chinese contemporary art faces dual pressures: on the one hand, it needs to integrate into the international art trend to achieve dialogue and communication with the world; on the other hand, it must also maintain the roots of local culture and inherit the profound historical accumulation. Therefore, establishing its own cultural identity has become an urgent task for Chinese contemporary art.

In the new socialist era, the driving forces for the development of art are mainly the following:

(1) National Art Exhibition: The National Art Exhibition (hereinafter referred to as the “National Art Exhibition”) is China’s national exhibition, held every five years.

It started in 1949 and has been successfully held for fourteen times by 2024. These fourteen National Art Exhibitions not only witnessed the historical changes of New China, recorded the context and achievements of the development of Chinese art since the second half of the 20th century, and brought together the exquisite passages of the history of New China's art, but also cultivated and trained many art talents and promoted the historical transformation of Chinese art from traditional forms to modern forms. Today, the National Art Exhibition has deservedly become China's largest, most widely participated, most diverse, most influential and researcheritative national comprehensive art exhibition.

Since the 7th National Art Exhibition in 1989, the China Artists Association has selected some outstanding works for international tours every year. This year, with the support of the National Art Fund and international organizations, the tour has been further expanded to cover Oceania, America and Europe for the first time. The exhibition venues include Auckland, New Zealand, New York, USA and Florence, Italy. The 65 works on display this time cover a variety of art forms such as traditional Chinese painting, oil painting, and printmaking, fully demonstrating the unique aesthetics and artistic exploration spirit of contemporary Chinese artists, aiming to show the world the appearance and cultural image of contemporary Chinese art. We hope that with our efforts, we can present to the world the fine art that can represent the overall appearance, mainstream form and national image of contemporary Chinese art, so that foreign audiences can see a more comprehensive, more real, and more contemporary and life-like China. (Liu Dawei: Showing the world the cultural attitude of contemporary China 2015-04-10 Source: Xinhuanet)

(2) China National Arts Fund: China National Arts Fund, abbreviated as CNAF, was officially established on December 30, 2013. It is a public welfare fund funded by the central government and accepts donations from natural persons, legal persons or other organizations in accordance with the law. Cai Wu, Minister of Culture, serves as the first chairman of the National Arts Fund Council.

The National Art Fund aims to promote artistic creation, cultivate artistic talents, create and promote masterpieces, and promote the healthy development of the art industry. (The National Art Fund was established and the Minister of Culture Cai Wu was appointed as the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Xinhuanet quoted date 2013-12-30)

The establishment of the National Arts Fund has important historical and practical significance. First, it implements the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, promotes the modernization of arts governance, and stimulates the cultural creativity of the whole society. Second, it marks the transformation of the art funding and review system, forming a public welfare fund model that is government-led, expert-reviewed, and oriented to the society. The fund not only combines fiscal and social funds, but also promotes the efficient use of funds through a fair and open review mechanism to ensure the innovation and diversification of artistic creation.

(3) The establishment and expansion of art galleries in various places. Since 2012, the establishment of art galleries in various places has provided a solid foundation for promoting the development of Chinese contemporary art. It has not only enriched the exhibition space for artworks, but also promoted the public's understanding and appreciation of contemporary art.

Long Museum (Pudong and West Bund) Long Museum is a private art museum founded by collectors Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei. The Pudong Museum opened in 2012 and the West Bund Museum opened in 2014. As one of the largest private art museums in China, Long Museum exhibits many Chinese contemporary art works and has become a new cultural landmark in Shanghai.

The Guangdong Museum of Art launched a new building construction plan in 2012, aiming to expand the exhibition space and improve the exhibition quality. The new building provides a better display platform for contemporary art in Guangdong with more modern facilities and multi-functional space.

Shenzhen Sea World Culture and Art Center opened in 2017 and is located in

Nanshan District, Shenzhen. It was invested and built by China Merchants Shekou. This comprehensive art center includes multiple exhibition spaces dedicated to displaying international and Chinese contemporary art and promoting the development of Shenzhen's art and culture.

Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum opened in 2015 and focuses on the display of photography and image art. As an important art institution in southwest China, it not only displays Chinese photography art, but also establishes connections with the global photography community through international image exhibitions.

The new Xi'an Art Museum opened in 2012 and is located in the Tang West Market Cultural Industry Park in Xi'an. As an important art exhibition venue in Northwest China, the new Xi'an Art Museum provides a platform for exhibition and communication for local and national contemporary artists.

Li Zijian Art Museum was officially opened on October 1, 2016. It is located at No. 385, Section 1, Xiaoxiang South Road, Yuelu District, Changsha City, Hunan Province. It covers an area of 15.3 acres and has a construction area of more than 25,000 square meters. It is a modern public welfare art museum. On July 16, 2017, Li Zijian Art Museum won the "World's Best" - "The World's Largest Artist's Personal Art Museum" (Wei Chunyu & Lu Chang, 2020, p.24-25).

(4) Government support for folk art. Since 2012, the national and local governments have stepped up efforts to protect folk art as an intangible cultural heritage. By issuing policies, setting up special funds, and conducting training for inheritors, the continuation of folk-art skills has been ensured. Against the backdrop of China's cultural revival, folk art, as an important symbol of Chinese culture, has received widespread attention and attention. Various places have promoted the dissemination and revival of folk art by holding folk art exhibitions, cultural festivals, international exchanges and other activities. These activities have not only increased the social influence of folk art, but also promoted the improvement of cultural confidence. As an important part of Chinese contemporary art, folk art covers a variety of forms such as

paper-cutting, embroidery, New Year paintings, and pottery, carrying profound historical and cultural values. It has an important position in Chinese contemporary art creation.

Analysis and summary

As China's social and political environment stabilizes, the strong political protests and social criticism in the past have weakened in art. The government's control over art has become more standardized, making artistic creation more moderate in subject and form. The Chinese government supports the development of art through various cultural policies and funds, encouraging artists to draw inspiration from traditional culture and innovate. This policy orientation has led to a more diversified contemporary art in China, no longer simply pursuing the avant-garde nature of art, but exploring contemporary art expressions with Chinese characteristics. Artists have also begun to pay more attention to dialogue with reality.

In the context of the new era, the revival of Chinese culture has become an important topic. In his report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed to "promote the creative transformation and innovative development of China's excellent traditional culture", which has pointed out the direction for the development of China's cultural construction in the future (Zhao Xinyan, 2022). As an important representative of ancient Chinese culture, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty contains rich aesthetic ideas and cultural connotations. With the discovery and protection of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty has gradually attracted the attention of some contemporary Chinese artists and has been influenced by its art to varying degrees.

5.3 The artistic influence of the Han Dynasty stone relief art form on contemporary Chinese art creation

Artistic form is the basic method of a work. It includes *composition*, lines, colors, techniques, etc., which are all directly observable, so many descriptive attributes can

be used to talk about the artistic influences on a work of art . Because of the long time, the colors attached to the Han Dynasty stone reliefs have mostly faded, so this section only studies and analyzes the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art from the three aspects of composition, lines and carving techniques.

It must be pointed out that determining influence is always a subjective decision. Unless the artist himself admits it, the researcherr cannot know whether he is really inspired by the work. In the field survey of this study, some painters appeared in art forms similar to stone relief art. Through interviews and exchanges, it was determined that the interviewees were not influenced by the art form of stone relief art, so they were excluded from this study. There are two ways in the field survey process. One is that the researcher himself is a college teacher engaged in art creation and a national first-class artist. Because of the convenience of his profession, he has contacted more contemporary Chinese artists, so there are more conversations and interviews. A lot of first-hand information was obtained through this way. The second way is exhibitions. By watching exhibitions, we can collect works that can be intuitively seen to be influenced by the aesthetic form of Han Dynasty stone relief art, and then contact the researcher. After interviews and formal interviews, we can confirm whether it is influenced by the art of Han Dynasty stone relief art. If it is, we will have an in-depth conversation to obtain first-hand information. The following is a specific analysis of the specific influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art.

5.3.1 Artistic influence of composition

for a work is self-evident. Both Western and Chinese aesthetics mention the importance of composition. It not only affects the visual beauty of the work, but also determines the ideological expression of the work and the viewing experience of the audience. A successful composition can give the work a strong visual impact, making it more expressive and communicative in artistic expression.

(1) The Artistic Influence of Layered Composition

The layered composition method in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty refers to the process in which the artist divides the picture into multiple horizontal layers to show different situations or themes (figure 153). This composition method is widely used in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. The picture is divided into four layers: the first layer, the Duke of the East; the second layer, the picture of playing the zither; the third layer, the kitchen; and the fourth layer, the carriage and the horse.

Figure 153 The Dongwanggongtu embodies the layered composition method
Source: provided by a personal collector (2023.08)

พหูน ปณ ฑิโต ชีเว

Figure 154 Mural by Zhang Qitian of Liudong Xin: Huaiyang - January and December 2

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 155 Comparative analysis of the composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and contemporary Chinese murals

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

The mural "February 2nd in Huaiyang" (Figure 154) by Liu Dongxin and Zhang Qitian is a mural work with layered composition as its main feature. The work presents

different scenes and themes in sequence through the arrangement of multiple horizontal layers. Each layer in the painting shows the changes of the four seasons in Huaiyang and the local life scenes. Each layer is independent but constitutes a coherent narrative as a whole. Through the comparative analysis with the multi-layer composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief art (Figure 155.), it can be clearly seen that this work borrows the layered composition technique in the Han Dynasty stone relief art. After returning from the communication with the researcher of the painting, I learned that it was under the influence of the layered composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief art that this work was painted. This work was also selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition.

Figure 156 Ma Liebo's print work "Sign Language—ABC" Jiangsu

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Ma Liebo's print work "Sign Language - ABC" (figure 156). also borrows the layered composition method of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The work uses multi-layered

sign language gestures as the main element and forms a visual effect like image editing by arranging different gestures in layers.

Like the layered composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the work divides the gestures into multiple layers, allowing the viewer to read the changing process of each action in sequence. This layered arrangement not only enhances the narrative of the work, but also gives the picture a strong sense of rhythm and rhyme.

(2) The artistic influence of screen partition composition

The screen partition composition method in the Han Dynasty stone relief art is a unique composition method, as shown in Figure 157, which is similar to the traditional Chinese screen design. This composition method divides the picture into several vertical units, making the whole picture present a screen-like partition effect.

This composition method provides spatial separation within the picture, so that different scenes or characters can be reasonably distinguished in the same picture, avoiding visual confusion. Different parts can express different spatial or temporal levels, enhancing the diversity of the picture.

Through the screen-like separation, the picture has a rich sense of hierarchy, and the viewer can view different parts in turn and gradually understand the meaning of the whole work. This composition method not only enhances the visual appeal of the picture, but also makes the content expression more organized.

The screen partition composition method reflects the unique understanding of space and order of the Han people. This composition method not only visually borrows from the actual screen form, but also culturally expresses the thinking about spatial division and order.

Figure 157 Han Dynasty stone relief art showing screen partition composition

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 158 Youth Chasing Dreams - Hospital Documentary Hospital " by Li Bo, the work was funded by the 2024 China National Arts Fund Project

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 159 Comparative analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and contemporary Chinese art creations

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

The screen partition composition method has been used by contemporary Chinese artists to add visual layers and cultural connotations to their works of art. In the researcherr's own oil painting "Hospital Documentary 2024" (Figure 158), the picture is divided into multiple parts, each part presents a different scene, and the whole forms a coherent narrative picture. This composition method is similar to the scoring partition composition method of the Han Dynasty relief stone. This division and arrangement method allows the picture to maintain overall coherence while presenting different contents, enhancing the narrative effect. Previously, the researcherr created a series of oil paintings of the "Hospital Documentary" series. He applied for the National Art Fund every year but failed. Last year, influenced by the screen-style composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief art (Figure 159), he redesigned the previous work and created this work "Youth Chasing Dreams - Hospital Documentary", and successfully won the 2024 Art Fund Funding Project.

(3) The artistic influence of the Nine-grid composition method

The nine-grid composition method in Han Dynasty stone relief art is a composition method based on geometric division. This composition method divides the picture into multiple grids and organizes and displays the content through the relationship between the grids. It not only has high aesthetic value, but also has a clear logical structure in narrative. This composition method emphasizes order and symmetry, which is

consistent with the emphasis on order and hierarchy in Han Dynasty society. Through the arrangement of the nine-grid, the picture has a solemn and neat beauty. The nine-grid composition method is not only orderly in narrative, but also provides multi-level expression in spatial organization. Each grid is both an independent spatial unit and a component of the overall picture, which enhances the spatial sense of the picture. The nine-grid composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs is not only a design technique used by ancient artists to express scenes, but also a cultural symbol symbolizing order, harmony and stability. This composition method divides the picture in an orderly manner, giving the work an internal logic, allowing the viewer to gain a sense of visual balance and psychological security in the orderly layout. This art form was not only widely used in Han Dynasty stone carving art, but also continued to influence later artistic creations throughout the long course of history.

Figure 160 Gao Yanhui and Zhang Jianmin's oil painting "Glorious Years"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

In modern art, artists have made various interpretations and innovations to the nine-grid composition. For example, Gao Yanhui and Zhang Jianmin skillfully used the nine-grid layout in their oil painting "Glorious Years" (Figure 160) to highlight the

subtle emotional interactions and social relationships between the characters. Each grid is not only independent, but also interacts with other parts to form a complex and harmonious whole. This layout not only enhances the narrative of the picture, but also increases the audience's understanding and thinking of the relationship between different characters.

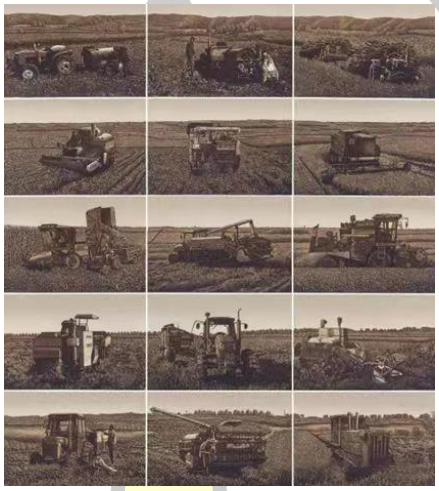

Figure 161 Li Li Junyan's out-of-print color woodcut "Another Harvest Season"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Li Junyan's out-of-print color woodcut "Another Harvest Season" (Figure 161) divides the farming scene into multiple delicate fragments through the nine-square composition, each fragment presents a different labor scene. This layout not only makes each independent scene have its own narrative logic, but also connects these independent fragments into a unified narrative structure through the overall layout, enhancing the integrity and narrative strength of the work. The use of the Nine-grid makes the work visually have a sense of order while retaining the richness of details.

Figure 162 Comparative analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and contemporary Chinese art creations

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Through the comparative analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and Chinese contemporary art creation, we can easily see that these two Chinese contemporary art works were influenced by the nine-square composition of Han Dynasty stone relief art. In the communication with the researchers of these two Chinese contemporary art works, it was confirmed that they were influenced by the nine-square composition of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

(4) The artistic Influence of film strip composition

like composition method in Han Dynasty stone relief art (163) is a method of dividing the picture into consecutive scene segments, similar to the arrangement of shots in modern film. This composition method arranges multiple events or scenes in sequence to form a coherent narrative chain, allowing the viewer to read the content of the picture in sequence and understand the overall narrative. The picture is divided into multiple consecutive scenes, each of which shows an independent plot or action. These scenes are arranged in sequence, like shots in a film, forming a coherent narrative flow.

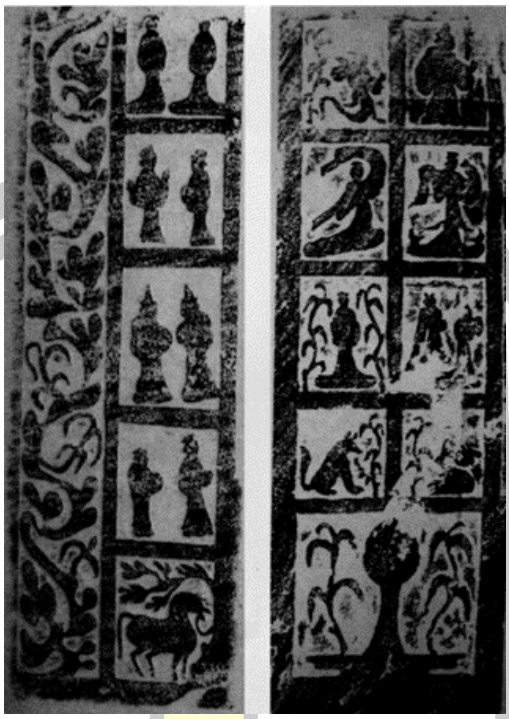

Figure 163 Feathered People, Dance, and Floral Patterns, (rubbings）

Source: provided by a personal collector (2023.08)

Figure 164 Mural "Glorious Starry Sky" by Peng Menghui

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 165 A Comparative Study of the Composition of Contemporary Chinese Art and Han Dynasty Stone Portrait Art

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Comparing the composition of contemporary Chinese art creation and Han Dynasty stone relief art (Figure 165), we can easily find that the mural "Splendid Starry Sky" (Figure 164) by Peng Menghui, Zhang Heng and Qiang Tianqi is obviously influenced by the film- like composition method of Han Dynasty stone relief art in terms of composition.

First, the mural "Glorious Galaxy" adopts a segmented form, dividing the picture into multiple independent but continuous scene fragments. This layout method directly draws on the film strip composition method commonly seen in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. This segmentation not only gives each scene an independent visual focus, but also enhances the integrity and narrative of the picture through the continuity and mutual echo of the scenes. Each fragment of the picture is like a frame in a film,

presenting a complete and rhythmic visual narrative process.

Secondly, this composition method enables the mural to show the vastness and splendor of the Milky Way through the connection of multiple scenes when presenting the grand theme of "Galaxy". In each scene fragment, the content of the picture has its own emphasis and complements each other, eventually forming a complete picture narrative structure. This treatment method makes the mural not just a static image, but more like an unfolding scroll. The viewer can gradually feel and understand the artistic conception conveyed by the work as the line of sight moves.

Finally, through this film strip composition, the work also enhances the extensibility of space. Through different perspectives and depth of field changes, each fragment of the picture allows the viewer to visually feel the breadth and depth of space, as if they were in the vast galaxy. This improvement in spatial expression is the successful application of the film strip composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in modern art creation.

In summary, the innovation and success of the composition of Splendid Starry Sky deeply reflects the influence of the film-like composition method in Han Dynasty stone relief art. Through the re-creation of this form, it injects new narrative possibilities and spatial expressions into contemporary mural art. The above analysis is based on an interview with Peng Menghui, the researcher of Splendid Starry Sky.

(5) The artistic Influence of repeated and specific composition

It combines repeated elements with unique changes and creates a strong visual effect and profound artistic conception.

In the picture (figure 166), some images or elements will appear repeatedly in the same posture or form. These repeated images are usually static, giving people a sense of order and stability. Among the static repeated elements, one or two dynamic and special elements are often inserted to create a prominent contrast effect on the picture. These dynamic elements often break the static balance and attract the viewer's attention.

The combination of static and dynamic composition reflects the diversity and

richness of life. The static repetition symbolizes tradition and order, while the dynamic unique elements represent change and vitality. The combination of the two shows the comprehensiveness of life.

Figure 166 Han Dynasty stone reliefs using repeated and specific composition
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

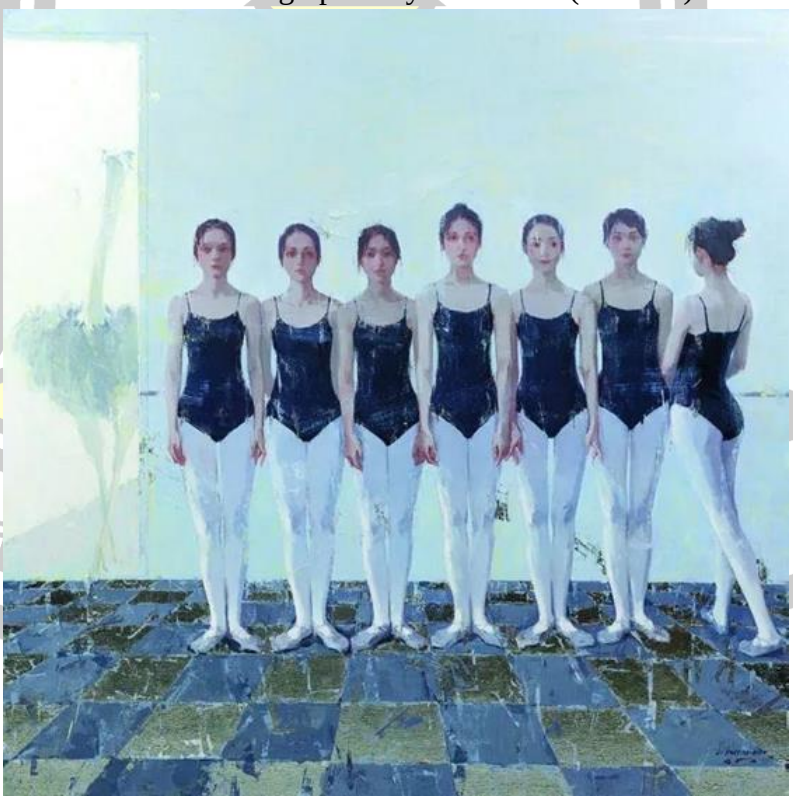

Figure 167 Li Yaoyao 's oil painting "The Eighth Dancer"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

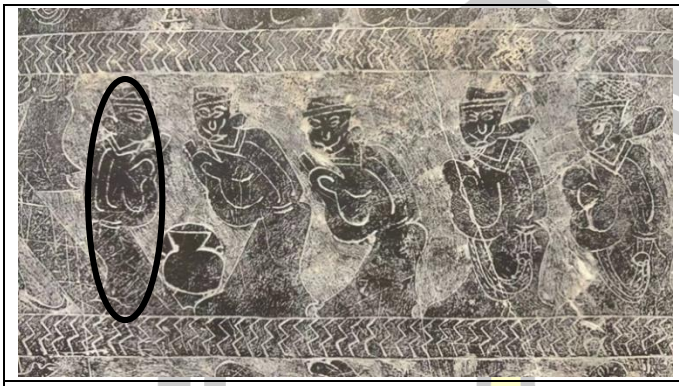

Figure 168 A comparative analysis of the composition of Han Dynasty stone relief art and contemporary Chinese art creation

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

In Han Dynasty stone relief art, the picture usually creates a sense of order by repeating the same image, while adding a few unique dynamic elements to break this order, thus creating visual contrast and impact. "The Eighth Dancer" (Figure 167) shows a sense of neatness and order by arranging similar dancers in the composition. The only dancer with his back to the viewer breaks this balance, highlights the uniqueness of the individual, and forms a sharp contrast with the overall consistency of tradition, giving the picture a unique visual focus. Through the comparative analysis of the composition of Han Dynasty stone relief art and Chinese contemporary art creation, we can see this artistic influence more intuitively. The above analysis is also confirmed by the interview with the researcher of the work "The Eighth Dancer".

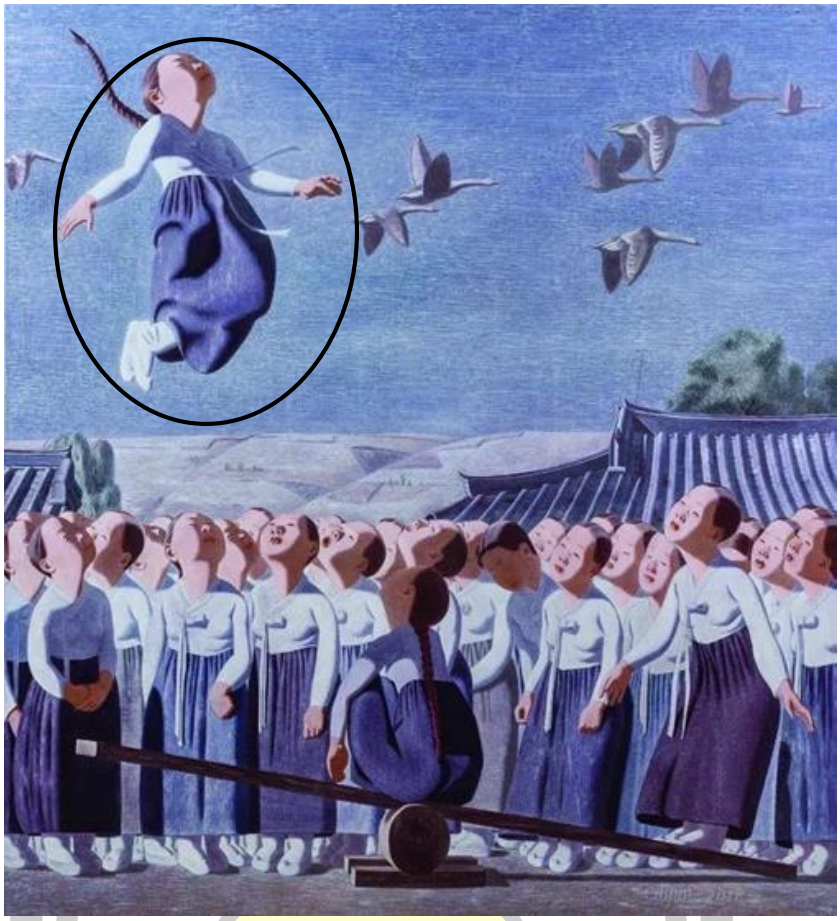

Figure 169 Cui Jun's work "Childlike Fun"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Similarly, "Childhood" (Figure 169) creates a peaceful atmosphere through neatly arranged children. However, the girl jumping in the air breaks this static balance, presenting an artistic effect of combining movement and stillness. The combination of movement and stillness makes the picture no longer a static scene, but contains the rhythm and diversity of life, forming a unified expression of tradition and innovation. These works draw on the composition method of Han Dynasty stone relief art, combining the aesthetic concept of traditional art with modern visual expression to create works that have both a sense of history and contemporary art characteristics. The researcherr is a familiar friend of Cui Jun, the researcher of "Same Year". In the communication with Cui Jun, the researcherr learned that the source of the composition of his work is the influence of repetition and special composition in Han Dynasty stone

relief art.

(6) Scattered perspective

In the Han Dynasty stone relief art depicting the grand scene of a chariot and horse travel (Figure 170), the overall composition uses a horizontal perspective to show the unity of the team, while the details use a three-dimensional perspective to show the real front and back spatial relationship. This combination can not only show the grand scene, but also highlight the vivid details. It is the most appropriate method to create a grand scene. In contrast, the Western scientific perspective method is not suitable for this kind of picture.

Figure 170 Han Dynasty stone relief art "Architecture and Figures" (rubbing)
Source: provided by a personal collector (2023.08)

Figure 171 Li Fang's print work "Song of the Prosperous Times" was selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition (Works Entering Beijing)
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

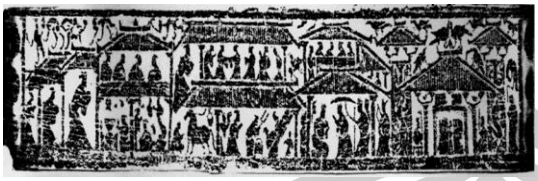
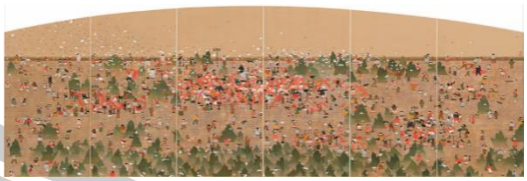

Figure 172 A comparative analysis of the three-point perspective of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and contemporary Chinese art creations

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

By comparing the Han Dynasty stone relief art works with the scattered-point composition of "The Song of Joyful Times" (Figure 172), it can be clearly found that "The Song of Joyful Times" is obviously influenced by the scattered-point composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief art.

In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, three-point perspective is used to show the overall scene, giving the viewer a grand and unified visual effect, while the stereoscopic body reflects the spatial hierarchy and the relationship between the front and the back in the details. Li Fang used a similar composition technique in "Song of the Prosperous Times", showing the mass activities in the square through three-point perspective, creating a scene with a warm atmosphere and many participants. This composition method effectively balances the relationship between grand narrative and delicate portrayal, highlighting the solemnity and vividness of the theme. This also shows the reproduction and innovation of traditional artistic techniques in modern art.

During the discussion with Li Fang, the researcher of "Song of the Flourishing Age", Li Fang elaborated on her idea of creating the work "Song of the Flourishing Age". She said that this work is based on the time node of the 75th anniversary of the founding of New China, closely following the theme of "eulogizing the new era and composing a new epic", rooted in the spirit of the times of cultural benefits for the people, with a large stage as the framework and people sharing cultural life as a microcosm, recording the rich and colorful aspects of people's spiritual life, reflecting the good life of the people in the new era. In terms of painting form, she adopted the classic scattered point composition method in the Han Dynasty stone relief art to

express the large scene picture, hoping to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional opera culture through the integration of fine arts and opera art, give full play to the positive role of literature and art in leading the times, and present the beautiful vision of national celebration and people singing.

Figure 173 Li Fang's print work "Song of the Prosperous Times" (partial)

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

In terms of composition, I adopted the perspective method of combining horizontal and vertical perspective in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. In the large scenes and layout (Figure 173), I adopted the horizontal perspective method to highlight the overall grand atmosphere. In the treatment of local characters, I adopted the vertical perspective method to clearly express the relationship between the front and the back.

(7) Composition with less white space

In a picture with a fixed area and shape if there are many characters, the remaining space in the picture - white space will be less, otherwise, there will be more white space.

From a human perspective, if there are more people in a space within a unit area,

the atmosphere of the space will become active, otherwise it will be relatively quiet.

Figure 174 Li Feng's New Year painting "Spring Festival"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 175 Comparative analysis of the blank space composition in the Han Dynasty stone relief art work and Li Feng's New Year painting "Spring Festival"

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Comparing the two works (Figure 175), we can see that both works use a relatively dense layout, with almost no extra blank space in the picture, and the visual elements fill the picture, giving people a full and rich feeling. The layout of traditional Han Dynasty stone reliefs emphasizes narrative and layering by tightly arranging characters, scenes, buildings, and animals to convey complex, multi-layered stories. Contemporary art works use a similar approach, with dense houses and character scenes distributed throughout the picture, with bright colors, rich layers, and full of dynamics and life.

(8) Symmetrical composition

In some of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, there are two warriors practicing martial arts (or fighting) or two dancers dancing facing each other. In order to show that they are "equally matched", the two images in the picture are often "arranged" in a symmetrical form. Therefore, the characteristic of symmetrical composition is to arrange the elements in the picture symmetrically along the axis, so that the two sides of the picture are balanced and consistent in form. This composition method usually takes the center of the picture as the axis, and the contents on the left and right or upper and lower sides are similar or identical in form, quantity and arrangement.

Figure 176 Comparative analysis of the composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief artwork and the paper-cut work "Spring"

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

By comparing these two pictures (Figure 176), we can see that the symmetrical composition in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty had a profound impact on the

paper-cut art and peasant paintings of later generations. First of all, the symmetrical layout common in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty shows a sense of orderly beauty. This symmetry not only makes the picture more stable, but also enhances the overall visual impact. In the first paper-cut picture, the traditional symmetrical composition is the same as the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. Every element in the papercut is arranged symmetrically, making the work full of rhythm and balanced beauty.

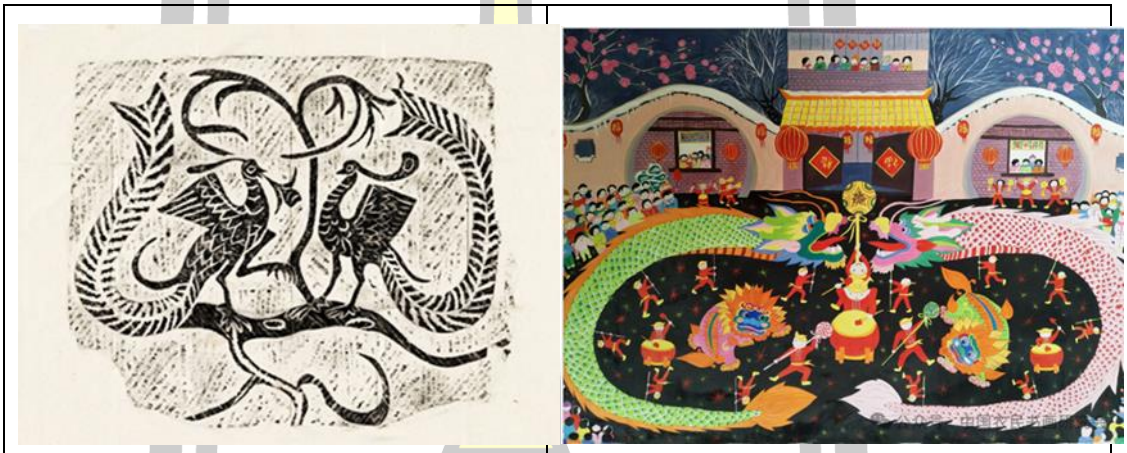

Figure 177 Comparative analysis of the composition of the Han Dynasty stone relief artwork and the peasant painting "Lantern Festival"

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

The symmetry in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty has also been inherited and developed in peasant paintings. Peasant paintings usually depict festivals or folk scenes. In the composition analysis of the peasant painting "Lantern Festival" (Figure 177), we can see that the two dragons and the characters in the picture form a symmetrical layout. This symmetry not only enhances the rhythm of the picture, but also strengthens the theme expression of the picture. This is in line with the symmetrical aesthetic concept in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty.

In general, the symmetrical composition of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs has influenced the art of paper-cutting and peasant painting. Both have inherited the formal beauty of Han Dynasty art in contemporary art creation, reflecting respect for and innovation in traditional culture.

(9) Suitable composition

The appropriate composition in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is an organic combination of content and form. By rationally arranging the elements of the picture, the picture not only has artistic beauty, but also can fully express the theme and artistic conception to be conveyed. This composition method reflects the high attention paid by the artists of the Han Dynasty to the layout and overall effect of the picture, so that each stone relief can achieve the best balance between form and content.

Due to the flexibility of the suitable composition, it can make the picture show a certain sense of movement and vitality while maintaining its integrity, making the work more vivid.

The main purpose of the appropriate composition is to better express the theme of the picture, whether it is a person, an event or a scene, through reasonable composition, the theme can be presented clearly and prominently. The appropriate composition reflects the wisdom of Han Dynasty artists in layout. They can flexibly adjust the composition according to the needs of the picture, showing a deep understanding of artistic creation.

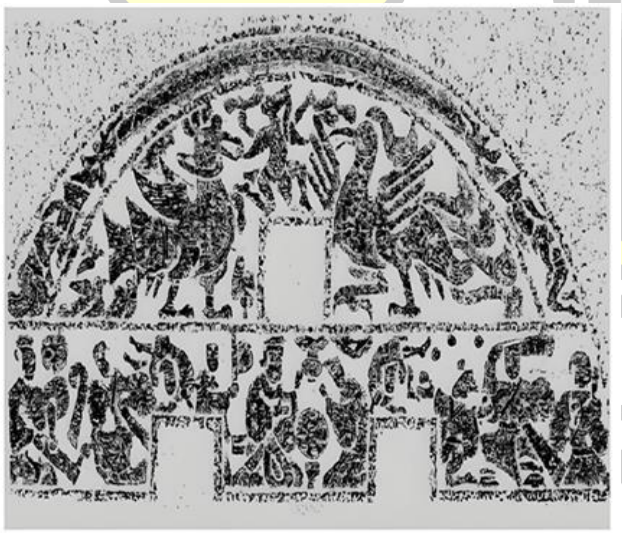

Figure 178 The rubbing of "Banquet at Home" adopts a suitable composition method

Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&ipn

In the Banquet (figure 178), the picture is semicircular, with a four-arched building in the middle. In the hall, the host and the guest are kneeling on the couch facing each other. A tripod and ear cups are placed in the middle , and there are two waiters beside them. There are two guards holding weapons outside the hall. There is a divine bird carved on the left and right of the roof of the building. On the left side of the roof is a divine feathered man holding an object, and on the right side is a phoenix, symbolizing "the immortal leading the phoenix". There is a gate on each side of the hall, and a divine man is dancing on each gate. The picture is also decorated with sawtooth patterns, diamond patterns and cloud patterns.

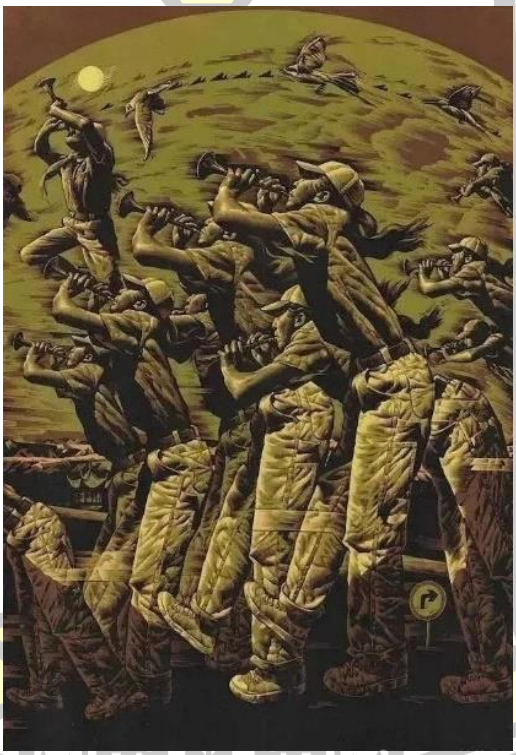

Figure 179 Wang Ruiqing's print work " Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix No. 2: Riding the Wind and Waves"
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

In Wang Ruiqing's color woodcut work "Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix No. 2: (figure 179) Riding the Wind and Breaking the Waves", the characteristics of the adaptive composition are fully demonstrated. In the work, an arc is set at the top of the picture, and this design determines the arrangement and layout of the scene below the

entire picture. The artist cleverly adjusted the elements in the picture according to this arc, so that the whole picture can maintain the overall harmonious beauty while highlighting the expression of the theme. This form of composition not only gives the work a sense of dynamics and vitality, but also makes the theme more vivid.

The appropriate composition originated from the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. It emphasizes the organic combination of content and form, and achieves a balance between the integrity of the picture and the artistic beauty through a reasonable layout of elements. In the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, artists used this composition technique to achieve the best balance between form and content in each work. For example, in some stone relief works of the Han Dynasty, the design of the top also determines the arrangement and form of the scenes below. This layout method is similar to the arc design in Wang Ruiqing's works.

Therefore, Wang Ruiqing's "Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix No. 2: Riding the Wind and Breaking the Waves" not only inherits the tradition of appropriate composition in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, but also innovates and develops it through modern woodcut techniques. This composition method gives the entire picture a strong visual impact and narrative, fully demonstrating the important influence of appropriate composition in modern art creation.

Through analysis, it is found that the composition form of the Han Dynasty stone relief art has had a profound impact on the creation of contemporary Chinese art. Its layered composition method, screen composition, nine-square composition method, film-film composition, repeated queue composition, dynamic and static combination composition, scattered perspective composition, and suitable composition have all been widely referenced and innovatively applied in modern art works. Through the innovation and development of modern art, they have been given new contemporary significance.

5.3.2 The artistic influence of the characteristics of line use

Lines are one of the most basic elements of the artistic language of painting. John

Ruskin believed that strictly speaking, only when a person has mastered the accurate and powerful language of lines can we call him a great painter. In painting creation, the role of lines is reflected in two aspects: first, the expression of contours and shapes, and second, the artistic value of the lines themselves.

Most of the images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are based on curves, especially the outlines of people and animals, which have almost no sharp or sudden turns. The use of curves makes these images appear solid and powerful, full of movement and change. These curves not only show the majestic style of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, but also bring a strong visual tension and sense of movement, as if giving the picture a musical rhythm. In particular, the use of S-shaped curves makes the picture more vivid. Images such as winged tigers, flying dragons, dancers with long sleeves, and running carriages and horses are full of the rhythm of life, bringing infinite beauty to people. As shown in Figure 180.

Figure 180 a rubbing of a pair of dragons in a Han Dynasty stone relief

Source: https://www.google.com/search?(2023.05)

Figure 181 Sculpture work “Chu Feng•Dance” by Yi Chao and Huang Jing1

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 182 Sculpture work “Chu Feng•Dance” by Yi Chao and Huang Jing2
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Yi Chao and Huang Jing's sculpture "Chu Feng·Dance" (Figure 181 and figure 182) displays complex abstract forms, presenting a sense of fluidity and dynamism. This work breaks the traditional concept of static sculpture through twisting, extending and overlapping shapes, showing an active visual momentum. The shapes in the work are stacked, interlaced and interlaced to form a rich sense of layering and space. The combination of different shapes and lines creates a three-dimensional effect, allowing the viewer to feel the depth of the work from different angles. Lines play a key role in these sculptures. A large number of curved, twisted and extended lines are used in the work to create a sense of fluidity. This use of lines breaks the static flatness and makes the work more agile and full of vitality. These powerful and expressive lines in modern sculptures are influenced by the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, and the inner emotions and power of the work are expressed through simple and powerful lines. In the conversation with the researcher, it was learned that this sense of fluidity and dynamic lines were influenced using smooth lines in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty.

Figure 183 Zhong Xianlong, The Dream of the Yellow Millet Series, resin, 2023
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Zhong Xianlong's "Yellow Millet Dream Series" (Figure 183) is obviously influenced by the animal images and dynamic lines in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The dragon images in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are full of fluidity and power, with simple and tense body lines, giving people a swift and flexible impression. This expression method has been continued and developed in Zhong Xianlong's sculptures. Through similar lines and morphological languages, he makes the characters and animals in his works present a surreal sense of movement and vitality.

In Zhong Xianlong's works, the postures of people and animals have a smooth sense of dynamics, as if they are ready to jump at any time. This dynamic shaping undoubtedly draws on the artistic treatment of animal forms in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs - simple and powerful lines and rhythmic postures, giving viewers a continuous visual appeal and imagination space. At the same time, Zhong Xianlong's works are more three-dimensional and modern in form, but still retain the simple and vivid aesthetic characteristics of Han Dynasty art.

Figure 184 Music Appreciation Picture

Source: Photo taken by researcher at Nanyang Han Dynasty Portrait Museum (2023.08)

From Figure 184, we can see that this Han Dynasty stone relief artwork uses smooth lines to depict the scene of people gathering to enjoy music, showing the unique artistic charm of lines, in which lines play an important role. The use of lines in Han Dynasty stone relief art is known for its simplicity and power. Craftsmen can outline the outlines of people, animals, and scenes with just a few strokes. These concise lines not only show superb skills, but also contain profound cultural connotations and artistic beauty. Contemporary artists draw inspiration from lines and emphasize the use of lines to express inner strength and emotions in their works.

The lines in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only concise and powerful, but also have a distinct sense of dynamics and rhythm. Whether it is the posture of the characters or the movements of the animals, the use of lines shows the beauty of dynamics, creating a lively atmosphere. In these works, the smooth use of lines makes the picture full of dynamics. The body lines of the characters are naturally curved, showing a relaxed and resting posture. The lines of the plants are slender and curved,

creating a gentle sense of dynamics. This sense of dynamics and rhythm makes the whole picture full of vitality and vigor.

Chinese contemporary artists have borrowed this simple and powerful use of lines to emphasize the inner power and emotional expression of their works. In modern paintings, artists often express complex emotions and thoughts through simple lines. This simple aesthetic style not only makes the works more modern, but also enhances the visual impact and appeal of the works.

Figure 185 Zhao Mengge's oil painting " Day and Night, Morning and Dusk"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

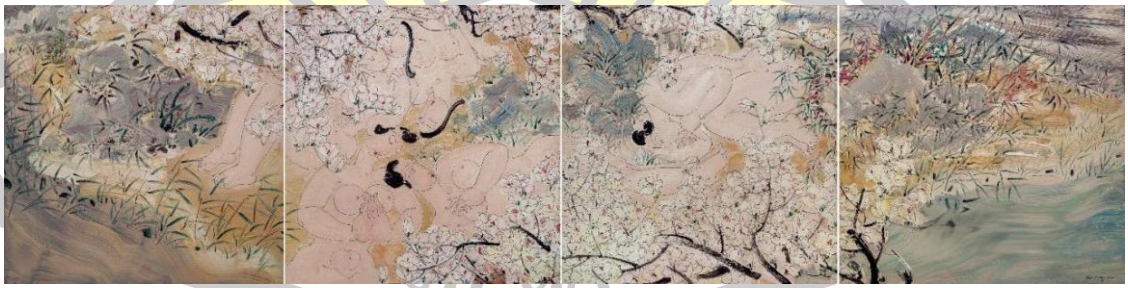

Figure 186 Zhao Mengge's oil painting " Pastoral Era"

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Figure 187 Comparative Analysis of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits and Zhao Mengge 's Artistic Creations

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Zhao Mengge was born in Henan. She is a professional artist. She studied at the Affiliated High School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. She was a visiting scholar at Georgetown University in the United States in 2011. She currently works and lives in Beijing. She is a member of the Chinese Artists Association, a visiting professor at the School of Art Creation of Communication University of China, a researcherr at the Beijing Contemporary Chinese Freehand Oil Painting Research Institute, a director of the Henan Oil Painting Society, and a director of the Asian Women's Development Association. From the perspective of artistic language, lines are the soul of Zhao Mengge's works (figure 185and figure 186). She is actually most interested in lines, and her best way of expression is also lines, which is also the most suitable for Zhao Mengge's personality. The simple and powerful lines of Han Dynasty stone relief art, the combination of abstract and realism, have had a profound impact on Zhao Mengge 's artistic creation. By comparing the two pictures (figure 187), the use of lines in Zhao Mengge's oil paintings draws on the artistic characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. In Zhao Mengge's oil paintings, she uses simple and flowing lines to outline people and

plants, avoiding excessive details and emphasizing the expressiveness and decorativeness of the lines themselves. This processing method not only enhances the dynamic and layered sense of the picture, but also gives the work a unique visual beauty, similar to the use of decorative lines commonly seen in Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Zhao Mengge's works not only use the line form in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty through concise lines, but also integrate the concepts and methods of contemporary art into the creation, forming an organic combination of traditional and modern art. This influence reflects the continued vitality of traditional art forms in modern creation and demonstrates the dialogue and integration of ancient and modern art.

Analysis and summary

Through analysis, it is found that the line aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone relief art not only enriches the expression of contemporary oil painting, but also provides new inspiration and perspective for contemporary art creation. As a basic element of painting art, the lines in Han Dynasty stone relief art have had a profound impact on contemporary Chinese art creation. The image contours in Han Dynasty stone reliefs are mostly curves, which give the picture a strong visual tension and sense of movement, and enhance the dynamic beauty and rhythm of the work. In contemporary art, such as Yi Chao and Huang Jing's sculpture "Chu Feng · Dance" and Zhong Xianlong's "Huangliang Yimeng Series", the fluidity and expressiveness of the lines are directly influenced by the Han Dynasty stone relief art, showing a sense of dynamics and vitality.

At the same time, the internal line features of Han Dynasty stone reliefs have also had an impact on contemporary art creation. For example, Zhao Mengge borrowed the simple and flowing line style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in his oil paintings, emphasizing the expressiveness and decorativeness of the lines themselves, showing the dialogue and integration of ancient and modern art. The line aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs has been inherited and innovated in contemporary art, providing new inspiration and perspectives for modern art creation.

5.3.3 Artistic influence of Characteristics of image portrayal

The exaggeration and deformation of human and animal images in Han Dynasty stone relief art is one of its most distinctive and shocking expression techniques. This artistic technique is not just an imitation of reality, but through exaggeration and deformation, it transcends reality and makes the work more symbolic and artistically appealing.

Figure 188 This image shows exaggerated figures and postures.
Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.04)

In Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Figure. 188), human figures are often given unnatural proportions and postures. The head may be deliberately enlarged, and the limbs may be extended or shortened. These exaggerations not only strengthen the identity and expression of the characters, but also make the viewer pay more attention to the mental state and inner world of the characters. In this way, Han Dynasty artists were able to transcend the appearance of daily life and convey the theme and intention of the work more clearly and powerfully.

The exaggeration and deformation of animal images in Han Dynasty stone reliefs

are key features, with dragons, tigers, and birds often shown in dynamic, powerful poses. Though based on natural forms, these images are artistically refined and deformed, enhancing their visual impact and symbolic meaning. This technique greatly increases the artistic value of the reliefs and has inspired later artistic creations.

Figure 189 Exaggerated figures on stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty
Source: https://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&ipn

Figure 190 Wei Mingsi’ soil painting “Singing and Sitting in the Moonlight”
Source:Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

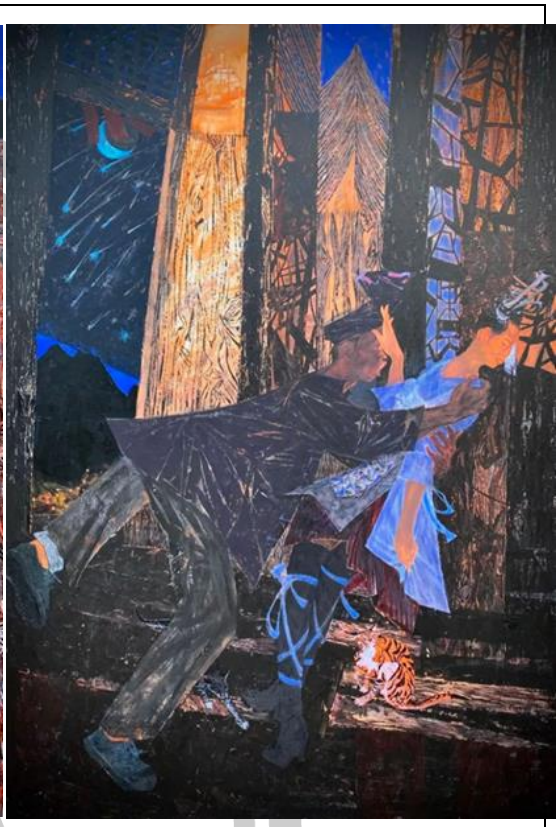

Figure 191 Wei Mingsi’ s oil painting “Pink Galaxy”
Source:Photographed by researcher (2024.07)

Wei Mingsi's works "Singing and Sitting in the Moonlight" and "Pink Galaxy" (Figure 190and Figure 191) are clearly influenced by the exaggeration and deformation techniques in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. These two works make the pictures full of drama and visual impact by exaggerating the postures and movements of the characters. Just like the figures and animal images in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty often use unconventional deformation to enhance the strength of expression and the shocking effect of art.

Figure 192 Comparison between Han Dynasty stone reliefs and Wei Mingsi's oil paintings

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

By comparing Wei Mingsi's works with Han Dynasty stone relief art works, it will be easier to discover the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on Wei Mingsi's paintings (Figure 191). In "Singing and Sitting in the Moonlight", the body of the characters presents unnatural distortion and extension, exaggerating the strength of the movements and enhancing the dynamic and emotional expression of the picture. The characters in "Pink Galaxy" also show exaggerated postures, and the deformation gives the picture a dreamlike atmosphere.

This exaggerated and deformed modeling technique also injects more expressiveness and symbolic meaning into the work in the context of modern art, making the work achieve a strong artistic effect both visually and emotionally.

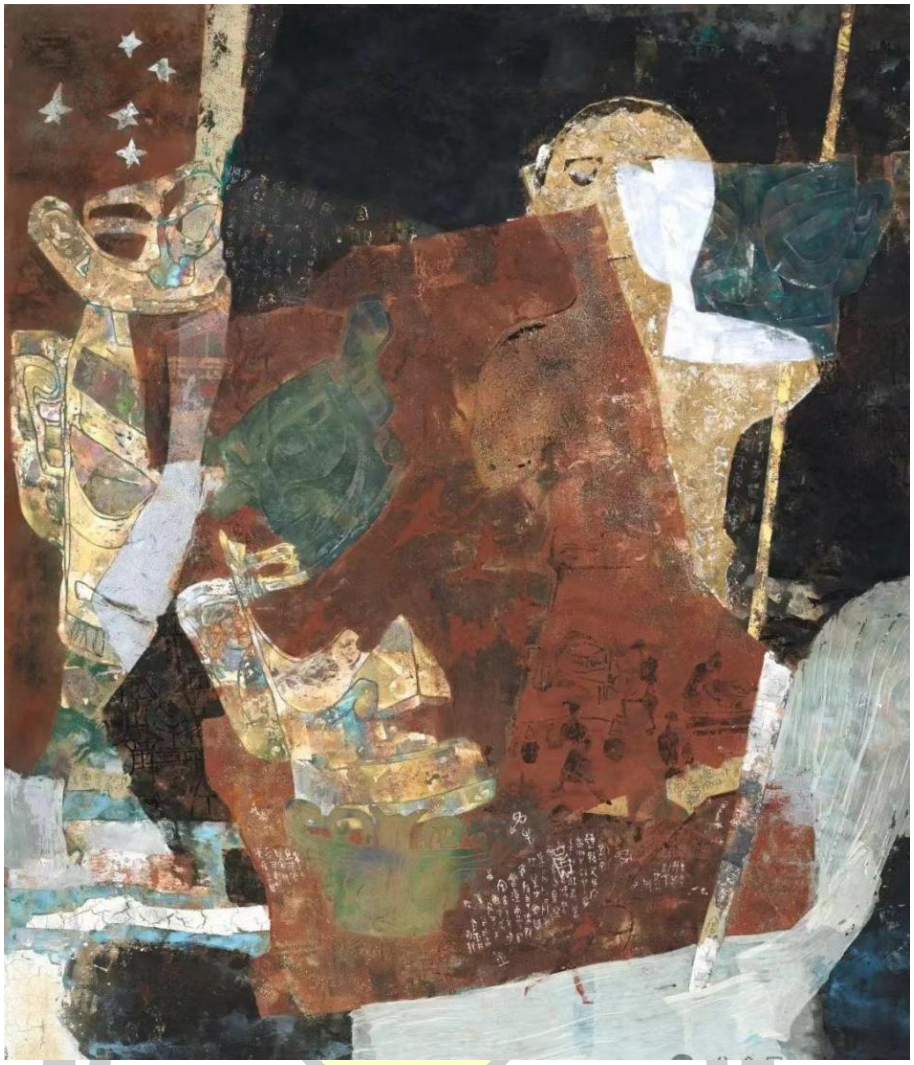

Figure 193 The Call of the Ancients" by Liu Xiuling and Chen Lilong ruler , mixed media painting.

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 194 Comparative analysis of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs and the Chinese contemporary art creation "The Call of Antiquity" (partial)

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Through the comparative analysis of the figure modeling in the Han Dynasty stone relief art and the Chinese contemporary art creation "The Call of Antiquity" (partial) (Figure 194), it can be seen that "The Call of Antiquity" (Figure 193) reflects the influence of the exaggerated and deformed modeling of the figures in the Han Dynasty stone relief art.

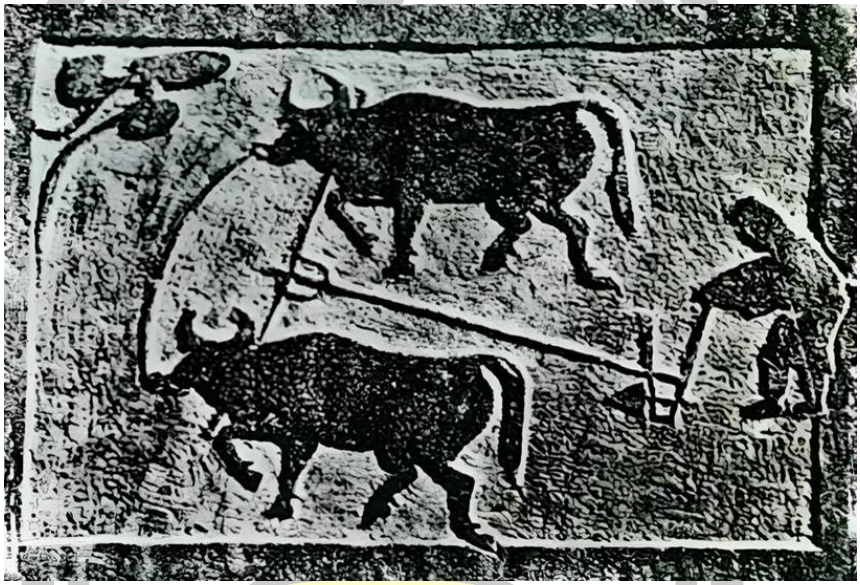

Figure 195 Ploughing cattle

Source: https://image.baidu.com

Figure 196 Paper-cutting works by Wang Guiying

Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 197 Comparative analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and papercuts
Source: Produced by researcher (2024.06)

Although the northern Shaanxi plateau is full of undulating hills, gullies and mountains, it also has a large number of Han Dynasty stone relief art sites and museums. The local paper-cutting art is influenced by the artistic modeling of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The difference is that the stone reliefs are carved on the stone with a chisel, while the paper-cutting is cut with scissors. Elderly Guo Peizhen is the representative of the paper-cutting art of northern Shaanxi. From the interview with the elderly Guo Peizhen, the researcher learned that the elderly Guo Peizhen was an orphan in her childhood. When she grew up, the heavy labor and difficult situation made Wang Guiying's life difficult and bitter. But because of participating in paper-cutting art, Elderly Wang Guiying, who had never been to school and did not understand art, had the courage to break the tradition. Since there are many stone relief sites near her home, she likes this stone carving art very much, and unconsciously brought this love into her paper-cutting, forming her obvious artistic style. She injected her love for life into her creation, and then a piece of art that records life and embellishes daily life was born.Summary

Through comparative analysis of images and interviews with the researchers, it was found that Chinese contemporary artists such as Wei Mingsi and Li Xiaxia borrowed the exaggeration and deformation techniques of the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in their works. By exaggerating the characters and natural elements, they enhanced the expressiveness and symbolic meaning of the works and created pictures full of drama

and visual impact. This kind of artistic expression not only brings a strong visual effect, but also gives the works profound emotions and symbolic meanings, allowing viewers to more deeply feel the theme and emotions conveyed by the works.

5.4 The artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art carving techniques on contemporary Chinese art creation

In the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, the exquisite use of line engraving techniques enables the characters, animals and scenes to be presented in great detail. This line engraving technique has directly influenced contemporary Chinese printmaking art, especially in woodcuts and copperplate engravings, where artists use delicate line engravings to express rich layers and vivid images. The smooth, concise and powerful line style in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty has become the goal pursued by contemporary print artists, further enriching the expressive language of printmaking (Figure 194).

Figure 198 Tan Haonan - Spring Breeze Brings Life to All Things, black and white woodcut, 2024

Source: Photographed by the researcherr (2024.06)

Figure 199 The process of printmaker Tan Haonan creating "Wind Rises, All Things Grow" in spring

Source: Photographed by the researcherr (2024.06)

Tan Haonan is a famous contemporary Chinese printmaker, Manchu, born in Longhua County, Chengde, Hebei Province. He is a member of the Printmaking Art Committee of the Chinese Artists Association, Vice Chairman of the Hebei Artists Association, Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Professional Committee of the China Cultural Promotion Association,

Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of the China Cultural Promotion Association, Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of the Hebei Academy of Painting, Master's tutor and professor of Shijiazhuang Tiedao University, and has held many personal black and white woodcut print exhibitions. His print (Figure 198) has just been selected for the 14th China National Art Exhibition and have been qualified to enter Beijing.

The Han Dynasty stone relief art occupies an important position in the history of Chinese art with its unique carving techniques and artistic style. These techniques have had a profound impact on the creation of contemporary Chinese prints. By analyzing the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and comparing them with

contemporary printmaking creations (Figure 199) , we can find the artistic influence of the Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary printmaking.

In the Han Dynasty stone relief techniques, craftsmen were able to carve complex details on hard stone through delicate carving skills.

These delicate depictions not only enhance the artistic expression of the work, but also show complex details through fine depiction techniques in contemporary printmaking. The treatment of carving details in contemporary printmaking has a clear inheritance relationship with the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

The Han Dynasty stone reliefs created a rich sense of spatial layering and concave-convexity through the techniques of shallow relief and Yin-Yang carving. This treatment method has had a profound impact on contemporary printmaking art, especially in woodcut prints. Artists imitated the layering of the stone reliefs by carving the depth of the plate, enhancing the three-dimensional sense and spatial effect of the work. At the same time, the use of light and shadow effects in prints also draws on the light and dark contrast in stone relief art, expressing the sense of space through the density and depth of the engraved lines. Figure 243

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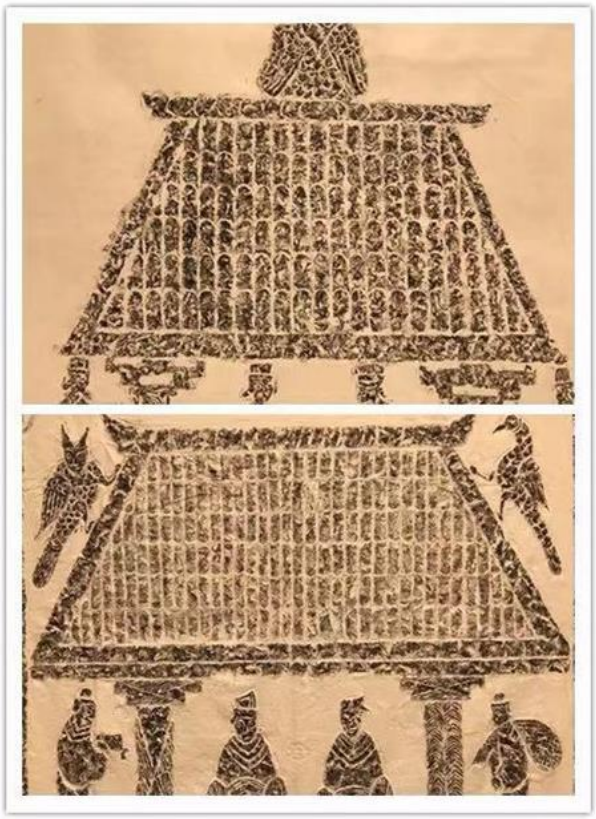

Figure 200 This picture uses a rough carving technique.

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

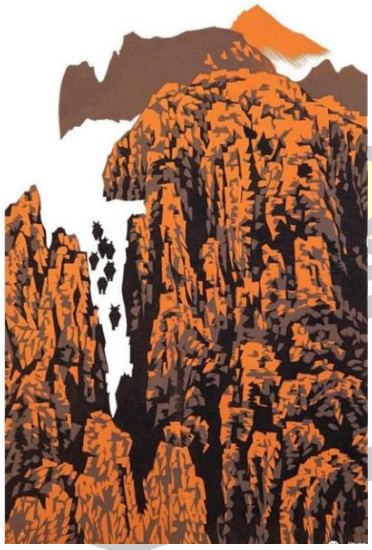

Figure 201 Li Yanpeng,“My Hometown and Mountains (1)”, 2020

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 202 Comparative analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and papercuts
Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

In the picture (Figure 201), the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty shows a rough and simple carving technique. The lines on the stone relief are informal but very expressive, with a strong sense of decoration and patterned features. This technique does not pursue the fine depiction of details but uses bold lines and simple forms to express the majesty and majesty of figures and buildings, conveying a unique historical atmosphere.

In Li Yanpeng's work "Home Mountain Competition (1)" (Figure 201), the influence of this rough carving technique is obvious. It will be easier for us to see it by putting two pictures together (Figure 201). The mountains in the picture are expressed with similar rough lines and blocks, emphasizing the overall sense and grandeur of the picture rather than the exquisiteness of the details. Through the stacking of large areas of color blocks and blocks, the work shows the majesty and magnificence of the natural

landscape, conveying a majestic visual impact.

This continuation and development of techniques shows that modern art pays tribute to and recreates the Han Dynasty stone relief art in form. Through the innovative application of extensive techniques, the artist has made modern works reach new heights in terms of expressiveness and visual impact, while also allowing the audience to feel the modern charm of traditional art forms.

The technique of bas-relief and line engraving is a classic form of expression in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Through the three-dimensional sense of bas-relief and the fine details of line engraving, craftsmen were able to create works of art with rich layers and expressiveness on the hard stone surface. This technique not only demonstrates the superb skills of Han Dynasty craftsmen, but also provides valuable reference and inspiration for the carving art of later generations.

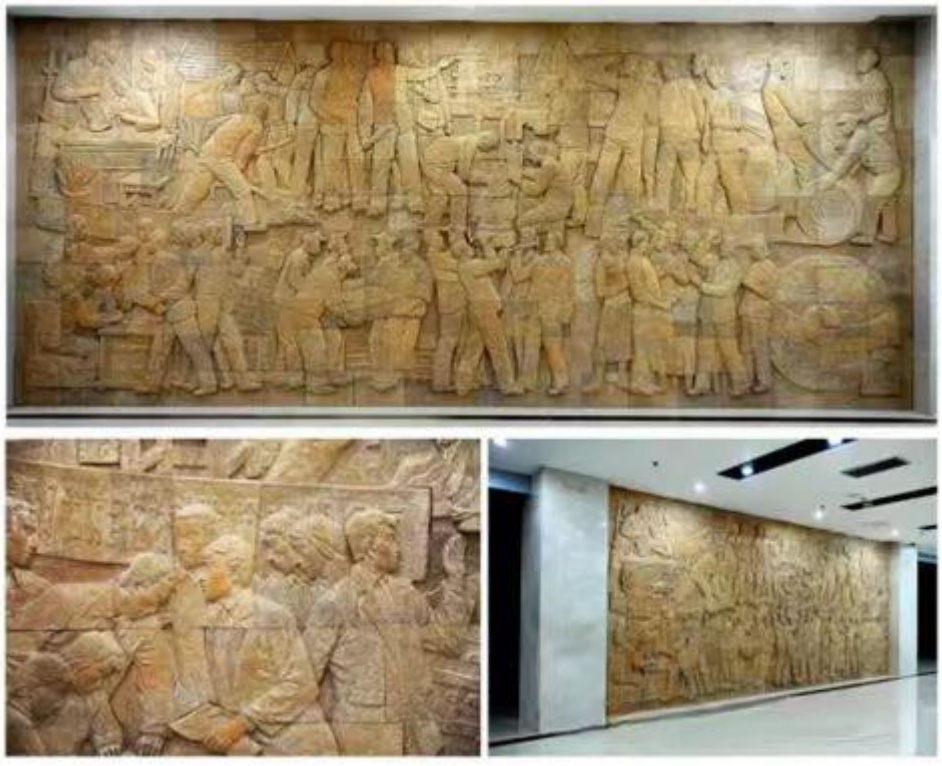

Figure 203 Mural "Road to Luyang" by Jiang Yanshan, Liu Chengliang and Yang Hongtao

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

The mural "Road to Luyang" (Figure 203) by Jiang Yanshan, Liu Chengliang and Yang Hongtao was obviously deeply influenced by the bas-relief and line engraving techniques in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. The bas-relief techniques of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty not only express the three-dimensional sense of the characters and scenes through the combination of bas-relief and line engraving, but also show rich details and layers through delicate line outlines.

This mural uses the technique of bas-relief to give the characters, buildings and background a certain sense of three-dimensionality. This treatment method can make the picture more vivid and allow viewers to feel the depth of the picture from different angles. This sense of three-dimensionality is the same as the expression method of bas-relief on stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty.

The delicate lines depict the characters' expressions, clothing lines, tools and other details, making each element vivid and expressive. The line engraving technique gives the picture a meticulous expression, like the line engraving technique in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, which aims to express the details and texture of the characters through fine lines and enhance the layering and realism of the picture. Combining ancient engraving techniques with modern art creation creates an artistic effect that has both a sense of history and a sense of modernity.

In general, the mural "The Road to Luyang" by Jiang Yanshan, Liu Chengliang and Yang Hongtao successfully borrowed the bas-relief and line engraving techniques from the Han Dynasty stone relief art. Through the clever combination of relief and line engraving, it gave modern mural creation rich expressiveness.

Analysis and summary

Through image analysis and interviews, it is found that the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art have had a profound impact on contemporary Chinese art, especially printmaking art. The carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone relief art have played an important role in inspiring the creation of contemporary woodcut prints and copperplate prints. Contemporary printmakers, such as Tan Haonan, have borrowed the

carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and enhanced the layering and three-dimensionality of their works through fine line depiction. Li Yanpeng's work "Jingxiu of Home Mountain (1)" uses similar rough lines and block-like carving techniques to convey a majestic and magnificent natural landscape and a strong visual impact. This technique continues the style of Han Dynasty stone relief art and has been newly developed in modern works. When contemporary artists Jiang Yanshan, Liu Chengliang, and Yang Hongtao created the mural "Luyang Road", they combined bas-relief and line engraving to show rich details and layering, giving the work a sense of history while also reflecting the charm of modern art. This inheritance and innovation in techniques shows the continued influence and inspiration of Han Dynasty stone relief art on modern sculpture art.

5.5 The artistic influence of the Han Dynasty stone relief art style on contemporary Chinese art creation

5.5.1 The artistic influence of broad and majestic style

Mr. Chen Lusheng, President of the Chinese Han Painting Society, said in an academic lecture entitled "The Beauty of Han Paintings": Han Dynasty portraits are the most imposing of all Chinese paintings; they are profound and broad. Based on tombs and faith, Han Dynasty artists showed unprecedented wisdom in understanding themes and decorations. Even if the portrait bricks were only a few feet long, even if they only engraved some simple patterns or animals, they were different from later generations. The difference is the artistic spirit unique to the Han Dynasty. Of course, the grand procession of carriages and horses, the echoes of heaven and earth, and the performance of various historical stories are all over the walls, standing tall and upright, and constructing a space that is shocking enough. This is the unique deterrent power of Han Dynasty art. They used the language of art to show the content that could connect fantasy in front of people at that time, and they could still radiate the spirit of the times more than two thousand years later.

Figure 204 Li Xuanfeng's sculpture "Infernal Affairs" was nominated for the 12th National Art Exhibition

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

The twisted and squeezed flesh, the helpless reliance and helpless watchfulness, as well as the energy generated by the strong attraction and repulsion between the soul and the flesh during the separation process together form the visual characteristics and spiritual tension of Li Xuanfeng's sculptures.

This sculpture, titled "Infernal Affairs" (Figure 204), is clearly influenced by the broad and majestic style of Han Dynasty stone relief art in its overall style and expression techniques.

First, this sculpture presents a strong visual impact and emotional tension through the expression of exaggeration and deformation. The figure expresses a struggle and pain through twisted postures, tense muscle lines and intertwined dynamics. This expression method echoes the exaggeration and deformation techniques commonly used in Han Dynasty stone relief art, which often deformed the images of people and animals to convey deeper emotional connotations and spiritual power.

Secondly, the sculpture shows a sense of heaviness and layering in composition. The entanglement and entanglement between the characters not only enhances the

three-dimensional sense of the work, but also expresses a complex inner emotion. This composition method reflects the comprehensive control of scenes and content that is common in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Through complex composition and well-defined layout, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty show rich content and grand scenes, thus conveying broad thoughts and cultural connotations.

Finally, the texture and treatment of the work also reflect a sense of rough power, which is like the rough and powerful carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Han Dynasty stone reliefs are famous for their direct, simple and powerful carving techniques. Although they do not pay attention to the fine carving of details, they show a majestic and magnificent artistic effect through the overall composition and the power of lines.

To sum up, this sculpture "Infernal Affairs" is deeply influenced by the broad and majestic style of Han Dynasty stone relief art in terms of image processing, composition arrangement and expression techniques, and continues the spiritual core of this traditional art through the form of modern sculpture.

Figure 205 Lu Long woodblock print "Fish" 6

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 206 Lu Long woodblock print "Fish" 7

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Lu Long, from Xingtang, Hebei, is a contemporary Chinese printmaker. He is currently a professor at Hebei Academy of Fine Arts, a member of the Chinese Artists Association, a national first-class artist, and vice chairman of the Shijiazhuang Artists Association. Professor Lu is a representative figure of contemporary Chinese printmaking. He often says that he was influenced by the artistic modeling of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, which makes his prints full of tension, as shown in Figures 205 and 206.

In many exchanges with Mr. Lu Long, I deeply felt his free and easy personality. Mr. Lu loves art, especially the collection of Han Dynasty stone rubbings. His studio is full of these rubbings, each of which bears witness to his deep understanding of ancient art. He often picks up a rubbing and appreciates and savors it carefully, as if he is having a dialogue across time and space with these ancient stone carvings. The majestic and vigorous artistic atmosphere conveyed by these Han Dynasty stone reliefs not only enriches his spiritual world, but also has a profound impact on his printmaking. Under the subtle influence of these works, Mr. Lu's printmaking style has gradually become more unrestrained and grander, full of power and tension, as if the grand momentum of Han Dynasty art has been integrated into the expression of modern art.

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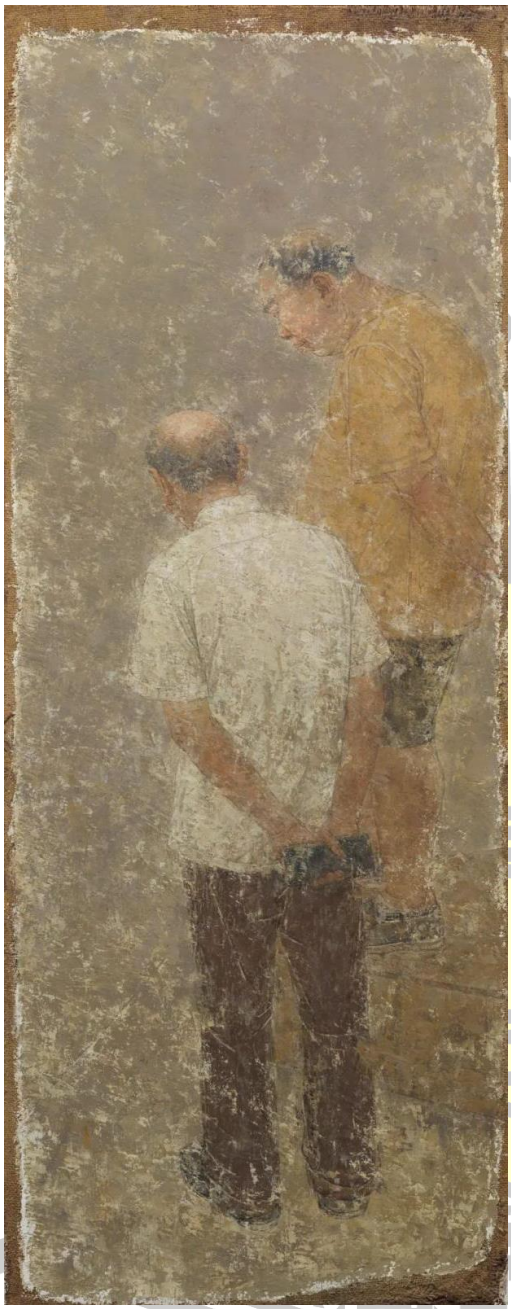

Figure 207 Lei Bo’s work “Traces” 3

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 208 Lei Bo’s work “Traces” 5

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Lei Bo is a famous contemporary Chinese oil painter. He was born in Guangxi in 1965. He graduated from Guangxi Arts Institute in 1991, completed his studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1996, and graduated from the 8th Oil Painting

Assistant Training Class of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2002. He worked in the Guangxi Artists Association from 1991 to 2007, and has worked at the Beijing Academy of Fine Arts since 2007. He has served as the deputy secretary-general, secretary-general, vice chairman, executive vice chairman, and chairman of the Guangxi Artists Association, and the vice president and party secretary of the National Academy of Painting. He is currently the vice chairman of the China Oil Painting Society, the executive director of the Art Committee of the National Academy of Painting, the vice chairman of the Beijing Artists Association, the honorary chairman of the Guangxi Artists Association, the honorary president of the Guangxi Painting and Calligraphy Academy, the director of the China Artists Association, and a national first-class artist.

Mr. Lei is the vice president of the China Oil Painting Society and is good at oil painting. In his decades of oil painting creation, his oil painting style has also changed. In his recent personal exhibition, he displayed his oil painting creation "Traces" series (Figures 207 and 208). In this series, he portrayed the daily images of ordinary people. In terms of painting techniques, Lei Bo incorporates traditional Chinese artistic elements into the creation of Western paintings, and uses the language and inspiration from the stone relief art and mural art of the Han Dynasty in the grottoes to express the tangible, perceptible, rough but real life around him. His exhibits also include depictions of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, murals and scriptures, which have historical and cultural connotations, but his heart is not here. He said: "If the depiction of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and murals is an experiment or process in my artistic exploration, then painting the people and things around me is my true artistic appeal and expression. The people in the paintings are my peers and elders who grew up with me or watched me grow up. I never think that art is something on the top of the ivory tower. Art comes from life, and life is every vivid imprint around you." He injects true feelings into reality and lets art take root among the public.

Figure 209 Sun Xun’s acrylic painting Portrait of Ms. W No. 3

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Figure 210 Sun Xun’s acrylic painting “Old Xiao No. 1”

Source: Photographed by researcher (2024.06)

Sun Xun was born in Majiang County, Guizhou Province in 1970. In 1990, he graduated from the Affiliated Middle School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 1994, he graduated from the First Studio of the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts with a bachelor's degree. In 1996, he graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied under Mr. Jin Shangyi, and obtained a master's degree. In 2007, he graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied under Mr. Jin Shangyi and Mr. Shao Dazhen, and obtained the first practical doctorate degree. He is currently teaching at the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, a professor and doctoral supervisor, and a member of the Chinese Oil Painting Society and the Art Committee. Professor Sun Xun not only has a very high level of Western painting, but also has a deep understanding of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. He once said that he had two "highlight" moments, one was when he saw Francesca's murals in Italy, and the other

was when he saw the Han Dynasty stone relief art. According to Sun Xun, oil painting, as a language, has its own unique materiality, which originates from the emphasis and discovery of objects in Western art. Sun Xun was deeply influenced by the spirit of classical oil painting. He explored up and down, rushed left and right, and spied on the eternity and stability of the "frontal law" of Egyptian art, learned the intuition, freshness and heaviness of fresco techniques, and revisited the flatness and broad and majestic style of Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art.

According to Sun Xun, it takes at least a week to work on a small portrait like this (Figures 209 and 210), five or six hours a day. After long-term gazing, investment, repeated tempering and adjustment, the object finally becomes itself, but it is more than that. The passing time and chaotic emotions have shaped it through the repeated scraping and overlapping of knife marks and brushstrokes.

5.5.2 The artistic influence of romantic style on Han Dynasty stone relief art

The romantic style in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty created an artistic style full of imagination and spiritual power through the expression of mythological themes, the artistic techniques of exaggeration and deformation, and the free treatment of space and time. This romantic style not only shows the creativity and imagination of the artists of the Han Dynasty, but also reflects the richness and diversity of the Han Dynasty society in terms of thought and culture.

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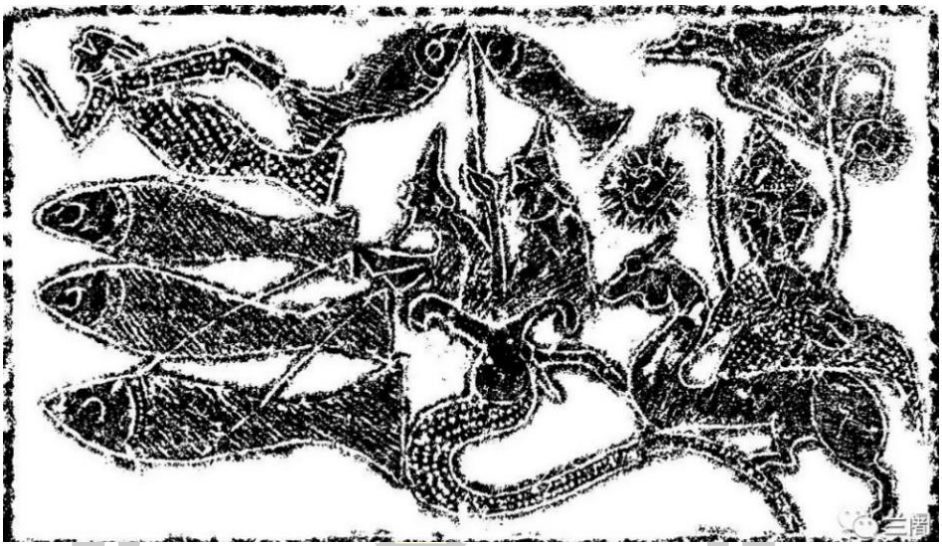

Figure 211 Fish Cart (rubbing) shows the idea of “harmony between man and nature”

Source: provided by a personal collector (2024.03)

The painting (Figure 211) mainly shows a boat, people, and fish and other creatures around it, symbolizing the place of human beings in nature and the universe. The boat represents the journey of life, while the fish and water symbolize the natural world and the source of life. The fish surrounding the boat embody the harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature, reflecting the concept of "harmony between man and nature", that is, human beings and nature are closely related and must coexist.

The image of fish symbolizes the reproduction of life, and water represents the source of life. These elements combined may express the concept of the cycle of life and death. This is consistent with the idea of "harmony between man and nature", emphasizing the continuous integration and cycle of life and nature.

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Figure 212 Aviation Dream: Wan Hu Flying into the Sky

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

Figure 213 Aviation Dream: Wan Hu Flying into the Sky

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

In an interview with the researcher, I learned that the inspiration for the work Aviation Dream: Wan Hu Flying into the Sky comes from the allusion of "Wan Hu Flying into the Sky" (Figure 212). It is represented by Wan Hu, the world-recognized first person to send humans into space with the help of rocket thrust, and combines ancient Chinese flying props such as kites, bamboo dragonflies, Kongming lanterns, flying crows, and rockets to form the development of ancient Chinese aviation. Putting the two pictures together will make it easier for us to see (Figure 213). It uses the unrestrained imagination of Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art to switch freely between space and time, depicting the Chinese people's pursuit and practice of flying,

and praising the Chinese people's spirit of self-improvement, unremitting pursuit, and selfless progress from ancient times to the present.

5.5.3 The influence of symbolism in Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty is not merely an aspect of ancient Chinese art; it serves as a profound reflection of the philosophical concept of "harmony between man and nature," a cornerstone of traditional Chinese thought. This concept underscores the harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world, as well as between humans and the universe, illustrating the deep-seated understanding the Chinese people have of the cosmos, nature, and society. The Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly embody this philosophy, portraying the Han people's reverence for nature and their deep appreciation for life. These artworks are infused with a sense of balance and interconnectedness, where human figures, animals, and natural elements are seamlessly integrated into a unified whole, reflecting a worldview where all elements of existence are interdependent.

The influence of this concept extends far beyond the Han Dynasty, leaving a legacy on the trajectory of Chinese art. In contemporary times, this idea of harmony between man and nature continues to inspire artists who, through their work, address modern concerns such as ecological balance and environmental preservation. By drawing on this ancient wisdom, contemporary Chinese artists have produced a wealth of artworks that not only celebrate the natural world but also advocate for its protection. These works emphasize the beauty of a world where art and nature are in harmony, echoing the timeless values of their Han Dynasty predecessors while addressing the urgent issues of today's world. In this way, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty continue to influence and shape the artistic landscape, fostering a deep connection between the past and the present.

Figure 214 Banquet entertainment

Source: provided by personal collection (2024.06)

This Han Dynasty stone relief (Figure 214) depicts a multi-layered scene, showing the harmonious relationship between man and nature through the depiction of human beings, animals and plants. In the upper part of the image, animals and plants are depicted. These animals and plants occupy an important position in the picture, indicating their importance in the social life of the time. In the lower scene, although the main figures are concentrated around the pavilion, the presence of the animals in the upper part forms an overall harmony in the picture. Humans and animals share the same space, suggesting the symbiotic relationship between man and nature in Han Dynasty society. This symbiotic relationship emphasizes the adaptation and dependence of humans on the natural world. The plant pattern in the middle part symbolizes the prosperity of life and the power of nature. Plants live in harmony with

the surrounding environment, not only providing resources for human life, but also providing a place for animals to live and food. This interaction between man and plants reflects the close connection between nature and human life. The appearance of the pavilion in the picture shows human construction activities in the natural environment. The trees and plants around the pavilion show that human construction activities did not destroy nature but integrated with the natural environment. This integration of architecture and nature symbolizes the Han people's reverence and protection of nature and demonstrates their wisdom in living in harmony with nature.

With the increasing severity of global environmental problems, ecological awareness has become increasingly important in contemporary society. In contemporary art creation, many artists have drawn inspiration from the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, inheriting and carrying forward the harmonious concept of the unity of man and nature. This concept has prompted artists to pay attention to the natural environment, reflect on the impact of human activities on nature, and use the symbolic and allegorical expression methods of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty to create a series of works of art with ecological awareness and environmental protection concepts.

Wang Wei and Qiu Jia's work "Different Lands, Same Sky - Same Heart" (Figure 215) uses rich and diverse flying birds and dense forests as the main elements to show the vitality and vigor of nature. Through the detailed depiction of different birds and the description of the forest environment, the work conveys a concept of harmony. The work depicts a variety of birds with different shapes and colors, showing the biodiversity of nature. These birds fly freely in the same space, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of nature. The different birds in the picture together constitute a complete ecosystem. Their existence and interaction show the interdependence between species in nature.

Figure 215 Printmaking work by Wang Wei and Qiu Jia: Different Lands, Same Sky - Same Heart

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

This ecological balance is the basis of harmony in nature and reflects the self-regulation and self-sustainment within nature. The work expresses the beauty of nature through delicate brushstrokes and rich colors. This beauty is not only a visual enjoyment, but also can arouse the inner resonance of the viewer, making people feel the "unity of man and nature " artistic conception that man and nature should live in harmony. The natural and harmonious scene shown in the work reminds us to cherish and protect the natural environment and promote sustainable development. This harmony is not only the harmony within nature, but also the harmony between humans and nature.

Figure 216 Chu Xiao's Chinese painting "Beautiful Sun over Mountain City"

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

Chu Xiao's Chinese painting "Beautiful Sun in Mountain City" (Figure 216) shows the harmonious coexistence of modern cities and natural environment, and the harmonious development of nature and cities. The picture contains both dense trees and mountains, as well as modern high-rise buildings and structures. The high-speed rail in the picture symbolizes human activities. It is cleverly integrated with the natural landscape without conflict, but complements each other, reflecting human respect and utilization of nature. In the picture, the subway train passes through the mountains and

cities along the track. The design of the track is adapted to the natural environment, without destroying the mountains and trees, showing the coordinated development of modern transportation and the natural environment. The existence of the subway not only improves traffic efficiency, but also reduces pollution to the natural environment, reflecting the improvement of environmental awareness. In the picture, there are many pedestrians and vehicles driving on the road, and people are active among the mountains, showing the free activities and enjoyment of human beings in the natural environment. While enjoying the convenience of modern life, people can also get close to nature and feel the beauty of nature. The dense trees and rich vegetation not only beautify the environment, but also improve the air quality, reflecting people's concern and protection of the ecological environment.

This work depicts the integration of modern cities and the natural environment, implying the harmonious relationship between humans, nature and society . The harmonious thought reflected in the painting not only emphasizes the protection and utilization of the natural environment, but also shows the combination of modern scientific and technological progress with traditional culture and the natural environment.

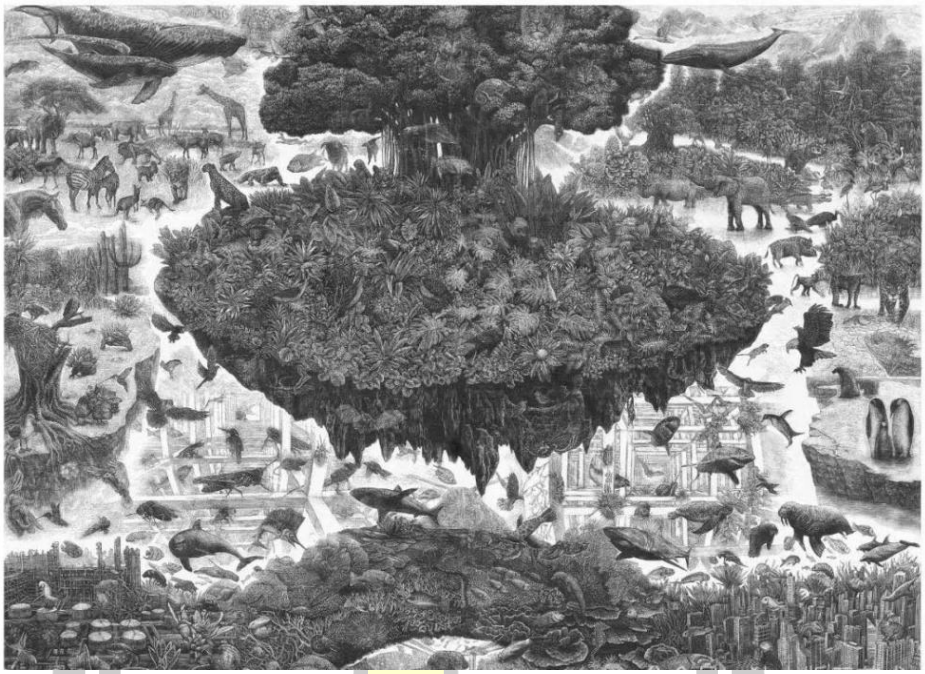


Figure 217 Chen Zhiqiang's woodcut work "Symbiosis"

Source: Photographed by researcherr (2024.06)

Chen Zhiqiang's work Symbiosis (Figure 217) presents a beautiful picture of the vigorous vitality and harmonious coexistence of all things in nature in the process of industrial civilization and urbanization. The artistic conception of the creation is to use an isolated suspended island as the central subject of the picture. In the center of the island is a large banyan tree with strong roots and luxuriant branches and leaves. The island is covered with a wide variety of subtropical plants and a variety of animals. The island represents a natural ecology full of vitality and a habitat for reproduction and development. Below the island is a modern industry and a prosperous city, which are integrated with the vibrant marine ecology. Different natural environments (forests, grasslands, wetlands, deserts, plateaus, glaciers, snow-capped mountains, etc.) and the natural ecology where diverse creatures (birds, beasts, flowers, plants, fish, insects, etc.) live are arranged on the left and right sides of the picture, and the rest of the space is interspersed with concrete and steel frames that symbolize human urban civilization.

The multi-dimensional sense of spatial extension of the picture is enhanced. The spatial depth and breadth of the picture are hinted by blank space and cloud forms. Different birds, beasts, fish, insects and other creatures are allowed to freely walk, fly and cross various natural environment spaces. Different environmental spaces and creatures are consciously superimposed alternately in the picture, breaking the boundaries of different natural environment ecosystems, subverting the way of viewing different real natural environment spaces, putting aside the limitations of time and space and the constraints of normalized processing, creating a scene of mutual blending of various natural ecological environments and creatures, creating a vast, magnificent and dreamy fusion space, and striving to create an atmosphere of the picture that echoes the theme of the coexistence of all things in nature.

Analysis and summary

In the process of social development and progress of human civilization, we should follow the laws of nature, and while striving for the development of human society, we should obey and protect the ecological balance of all things in nature, maintain biodiversity and the development of human civilization and society, and jointly build a beautiful home where all things live in harmony.

As global environmental problems become increasingly serious, the harmonious concept of "harmony between man and nature" in Han Dynasty stone relief art has a particularly important impact on contemporary art creation. By inheriting and carrying forward this concept, contemporary artists can better express the harmonious beauty of man and nature in their works and contribute to protecting the natural environment and maintaining ecological balance.

In short, the artistic style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs has had a profound impact on the creation of contemporary Chinese art, especially in terms of the grand momentum, romantic style, and symbolic meaning of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

Summary

This chapter mainly uses the concept of "artistic influence" as a starting point to

explore the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on the creation of contemporary Chinese art. Specifically, the profound influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on the creation of contemporary Chinese artists in terms of composition form, lines, modeling, carving techniques, aesthetic content and style is studied. The study found that the techniques of layered composition, screen composition, nine-square composition, and film composition in Han Dynasty stone relief art are widely used in the creation of contemporary Chinese art, enhancing the narrative and spatial expression of the works. The concise, powerful, rhythmic lines and exaggerated deformation modeling techniques in Han Dynasty stone reliefs have had an important impact on the creation of contemporary artists in the fields of sculpture and painting, especially in terms of expressing the dynamics and emotions of people and animals, and are widely used. The delicate line engraving and rough carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs have guiding significance for the technical innovation of contemporary Chinese prints, sculptures and other art forms. The inheritance and development of these techniques have enriched the means of expression of contemporary art. The magnificent and romantic artistic style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, as well as the harmonious concept of "harmony between man and nature", have profoundly influenced the ideas and content of contemporary art creation, prompting contemporary artists to incorporate traditional aesthetic ideas into their works to express their care for nature and society. This study reveals that Han Dynasty stone relief art not only affects contemporary art creation in form, but also injects profound cultural connotations into contemporary art at the ideological level. Through analysis, the researcher proves that the inspiration of Han Dynasty stone relief art to contemporary art is not only reflected in the technical level, but also in how to express complex social, cultural and natural themes through art. This influence has promoted the diversification and innovation of Chinese contemporary art, strengthened the presence of traditional culture in modern art, and provided rich creative resources and inspiration for the international art world. These research results have important academic value and practical significance, providing a

new perspective for a deeper understanding of the development of Chinese contemporary art, and providing a valuable reference for exploring the combination of traditional and modern art. This study reflects the continuous influence of traditional art on contemporary creation and highlights the importance of cultural inheritance and the vitality of traditional aesthetic concepts in modern art creation.

CHAPTER VI

Research Summary, Discussion, and Recommendation

6.1 Research Summary

This study takes the Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art as the research object and sets four research objectives. The first is to study the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of the Han Dynasty stone relief art.The second is to study and analyze the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art . The third is to study and analyze the aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone relief art. The fourth is to study and analyze the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art. This paper uses qualitative research methods and mainly collects three types of information: (I) research reports and related paper documents from libraries and Internet systems. By sorting, organizing and analyzing the literature, the researcher seek relevant views and information on the development history, cultural value and aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone relief art. (2) The researcherrs went to different geographical spaces, including Nanyang Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, Suide Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, Xuzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, Tengzhou Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Museum, Shandong Museum, Sichuan Museum, and other stone relief distribution areas to obtain a large amount of first-hand information. The sources of information for the study of the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on the creation of contemporary Chinese art include first-hand information obtained from artist studios, contemporary Chinese art exhibitions and other places. Then, with the support of relevant theories such as cultural value, aesthetics, and artistic influence, the relevant materials are studied and analyzed, and the research results are presented in the form of descriptive analysis on this basis. The obtained findings are now summarized in a general way.

6.1.1Summary of the study on the geographical space, historical development process, and social environment of prosperity and decline of Han Dynasty stone relief art

This chapter summarizes the following main research findings through the analysis of the geographical spatial distribution, historical development process, and social environment of the rise and fall of Han Dynasty stone relief art:

The stone relief art of the Han Dynasty gradually developed and grew on the basis of the Warring States Period and reached prosperity in the middle and late Western Han Dynasty. Its artistic style and techniques reached its peak in the Eastern Han Dynasty and became the mainstream form of tomb decoration in the Han Dynasty. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are mainly concentrated in Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, Shanxi, Sichuan and other places. There are significant differences in the subject matter, expression techniques and artistic styles of the stone reliefs in different regions. This is closely related to the local cultural background and economic conditions. The prosperity of the stone relief art in the Han Dynasty is closely related to the political, economic and cultural environment at that time. The centralized political stability, economic prosperity, the popularity of lavish burials, and the influence of Confucianism and Taoist beliefs in the Han Dynasty all provided a solid foundation for the development of stone relief art. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, due to political turmoil, economic recession, cultural changes and changes in funeral customs, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty gradually declined and was eventually replaced by other forms of art.

The study explored how the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty flourished under a specific political, economic and cultural environment, and analyzed the reasons for their decline in social change. The study shows that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are not only an important part of tomb decoration art, but also an important carrier of the social culture and beliefs of the Han Dynasty. These research findings provide strong support for our in-depth understanding of the cultural connotation and value of the stone

reliefs of the Han Dynasty.

6.1.2 Summary of the study and analysis on the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art

Through in-depth analysis of the material culture, spiritual culture and communicative culture value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the multi-level cultural connotations of Han Dynasty society are systematically revealed.

First, in terms of material cultural value**,** the Han Dynasty stone reliefs vividly reproduce the details of the Han Dynasty society's architecture, clothing, diet, transportation, agricultural production, etc. Through these images, we can not only understand the material living standards, the development of craftsmanship and technology, and the social and economic structure of the Han Dynasty, but also see people's pursuit of quality of life and artistic aesthetics at that time. The rich material cultural expressions in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs constitute important materials for studying the social economy and lifestyle of the Han Dynasty, and also provide us with valuable references for understanding the social productivity and craftsmanship level at that time.

Secondly, in terms of the cultural value of communication, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty shows the daily communication, folk customs, festivals, religious beliefs and etiquette systems of the society at that time. These images not only reflect the social life and cultural traditions of the Han people, but also reveal their etiquette norms, moral concepts and religious beliefs in social activities. Through the depiction of these scenes, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty provide us with important information for understanding the social structure and interpersonal relationships of the Han Dynasty. They show how the Han people expressed social norms and cultural beliefs through visual art and reflect the importance that the Han society attached to harmonious interpersonal relationships and clan ties.

Finally, the spiritual and cultural values contained in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs, such as national spirit, governance philosophy, traditional virtues and ways of thinking,

demonstrate the core values and ideological system of Han Dynasty society. The Han people's advocacy of self-improvement, bravery and tenacity, their optimistic attitude towards death, and their pursuit of national unity and social harmony are all vividly reflected in the stone reliefs. In addition, the Han Dynasty stone reliefs also express the governance philosophy of governing the country with filial piety and paying equal attention to etiquette and law, as well as traditional virtues such as loyalty, filial piety and etiquette, which reflect the moral concepts and political wisdom of Han Dynasty society. Through these images, this article reveals how Han Dynasty society maintained social order and personal behavior through spiritual culture and provides us with profound insights into the worldview and values of the Han people.

In summary, the research in this chapter shows that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty are not only a faithful record of the material life of the Han Dynasty society, but also a symbol of the spiritual culture and social interaction of the Han Dynasty. As an important carrier of Han Dynasty culture, these stone reliefs not only provide us with rich materials for understanding Han Dynasty society, but also provide valuable historical resources and inspiration for contemporary cultural construction and cultural innovation. Through in-depth research on the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, we can more comprehensively understand and appreciate the unique charm of Han Dynasty culture and provide strong support for promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture and promoting contemporary cultural innovation. This study has laid a solid foundation for the subsequent in-depth discussion of Han Dynasty aesthetics and cultural heritage.

6.1.3 Summary of the aesthetic research and analysis of Han Dynasty stone relief art

This chapter adopts the aesthetic framework proposed by Mr. Ye Lang to systematically divide the Han Dynasty stone relief art into three levels: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content, and conducts in-depth analysis, revealing the outstanding skills and artistic creativity of Han Dynasty craftsmen in

many aspects.

Research shows that the carving skills of Han Dynasty stone reliefs were already quite mature. Craftsmen were able to accurately select and use different types of stone (such as bluestone, sandstone, granite, etc.), and flexibly use chisels, hammers, grinders and other tools according to the characteristics of the stone to create exquisite reliefs and line carvings. These works not only show the craftsmen's skilled skills, but also reflect their deep understanding of the characteristics of stone. The study also found that every link in the production process of Han Dynasty stone reliefs was extremely delicate, from the selection of stone materials, the drawing of drawings to the final carving and coloring, all reflecting a high level of craftsmanship. The study revealed that the Han Dynasty stone reliefs showed a high degree of diversity and complexity in composition, line expression and modeling techniques. This not only reflects the artistic creativity of the craftsmen, but also reflects their inheritance and innovation of traditional skills in expression.

This chapter discusses in detail the diversity and complexity of the composition of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and the craftsmen showed great artistic creativity in the composition. Various forms such as layered composition, screen composition, nine-square composition, and film-like composition are flexibly used to show the layering and narrative structure of the picture. In addition, the study also analyzes the expressive language of lines in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The craftsmen successfully expressed the dynamic and rhythmic sense of the image through smooth and powerful lines. The chapter also explores the modeling methods of exaggeration and deformation, showing the uniqueness and creativity of Han Dynasty stone relief art. The study shows that the expression forms of Han Dynasty stone reliefs are rich and diverse, with both detailed depictions of reality and symbolic expressions of the ideal world, fully demonstrating the aesthetic value and ideological connotation of Han Dynasty art.

This chapter also deeply interprets the thoughts and meanings carried in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty. The study found that the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty

not only depicted scenes of daily life, such as weaving and farming, highlighting the harmony of family and society, but also incorporated a large number of elements symbolizing auspiciousness and happiness, reflecting the pursuit of a better life in the Han Dynasty. In addition, the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty also expressed the yearning for an ideal world through mythological stories and symbolic images . This study reveals the understanding and pursuit of family, society, nature and an ideal world by the people of the Han Dynasty. The stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty not only depicted the daily life scenes of the society at that time, but also expressed the yearning for an ideal world and the pursuit of harmonious coexistence between man and nature through mythological stories and symbolic images. These ideological connotations not only enriched the artistic expression of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty, but also enabled people to better understand the ideological concepts of the Han Dynasty society.

In general, this chapter systematically reveals the complexity and multi-layered nature of the Han Dynasty stone relief art through the analysis of the three levels of technology, form and content. The study shows that the Han Dynasty stone relief art not only demonstrates superb carving skills at the technical level, but also shows great artistic creativity in the form of expression. It also reflects the Han Dynasty society's understanding and pursuit of family, society, nature and the ideal world at the ideological level. This study lays a solid foundation for further exploring the cultural significance of the Han Dynasty stone relief art and its inspiration for contemporary art creation.

6.1.4 Summary of the research and analysis on the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation

In this chapter, the artistic influence of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty on the creation of contemporary Chinese art is discussed. Specifically, the artistic influence of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty on the creation of contemporary Chinese artists in terms of composition form, use of lines, characteristics of shaping shapes , carving techniques, aesthetic content and inner meaning, and artistic style is studied.

The study found that the layered composition, screen composition, nine-square composition, and film-like composition techniques in the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty were applied to the creation of contemporary Chinese art, enhancing the narrative and spatial expression of the works. The concise, powerful, rhythmic lines and exaggerated and deformed modeling techniques in the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty have had an important artistic influence on the creation of contemporary artists in the fields of sculpture and painting, especially in the expression of the dynamics of characters, and have been widely referenced. The delicate line engraving and rough carving techniques of the stone reliefs of the Han Dynasty have guiding significance for the technical innovation of contemporary Chinese printmaking, sculpture and other art forms. The inheritance and development of these techniques have enriched the means of expression of contemporary art. The broad, majestic and romantic artistic style of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, as well as the harmonious concept of "harmony between man and nature", have profoundly influenced the ideas and content of contemporary art creation, prompting contemporary artists to integrate traditional aesthetic ideas into their works and express their concern for nature and society.

This study reveals that the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty not only influenced contemporary art creation in terms of form, but also injected profound cultural connotations into contemporary art at the ideological level. Through analysis, it is proved that the inspiration of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty to contemporary art is not only reflected in the technical level, but also in how to express complex social, cultural and natural themes through art. This artistic influence has promoted the diversification and innovation of contemporary Chinese art and strengthened the presence of traditional culture in contemporary art.

These research results have important academic value and practical significance, providing a new perspective for a deeper understanding of the development of Chinese contemporary art, and also providing a valuable reference for exploring the combination of traditional and contemporary art. The research in this chapter reflects

the continuous artistic influence of traditional art on contemporary creation, indicating the importance of cultural inheritance and the vitality of traditional aesthetic concepts in contemporary art creation.

6.2 Research Discussion

6.2.1 Discussion on the development history, geographical environment, subject classification, factors of origin and development of Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art, as well as the discovery process and status of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Through literature review, the historical development of the stone relief art in the Han Dynasty was studied and analyzed. After sorting out the literature, it was found that recently, Song Yanping published an article (Song Yanping, 2024, p.23-28) discussing the content, characteristics and historical value of the stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty in Jiangsu. Zhang Zhuoyuan discussed the development history of the stone relief tombs in the Han Dynasty in Nanyang in the article "An Analysis of the Reverse Development of the Stone Relief Tombs in the Han Dynasty in Nanyang " (Zhang Zhuoyuan, 2021, p.80-85) , especially the phenomenon of "reverse development", that is, from the middle and late Western Han Dynasty to the Xinmang period, the stone relief tombs gradually declined after a short period of "prosperity". The article aims to explore the reasons for this decline. The article introduces in detail the origin, development and evolution of the stone relief tombs in Nanyang, analyzes the structural characteristics of the Han Dynasty stone relief tombs in Nanyang, and explores the architectural applicability of these structural forms and their impact on funeral culture. The article points out that the layout and structural form of the stone relief tombs are affected by the progress of architectural technology and the development of social productivity.

This article attempts to reveal the unique development path and cultural significance of Han Dynasty stone tombs through the study of the structural form, architectural concept and social background of Han Dynasty stone tombs in Nanyang

area.

Gao Xuexue in. (Gao Xuexue , 2023, p.202383-85) . "A Preliminary Study on the Subject Matter of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs in Northern Shaanxi " discusses the close relationship between the subject matter of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in northern Shaanxi and the natural environment, social production methods, the worship of lavish burials, the belief in the "immortality of the soul", and ethnic conflicts and integration at that time in northern Shaanxi.

Liu Yanfeng. (2021). Exploring the background and artistic function of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Cultural Relics Appraisal and Appreciation (04), 28-30. The article analyzes the main artistic functions of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and emphasizes their role in funeral customs. Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only an art form for decorating tombs, but also have the function of providing comfort to the dead and continuing their beliefs. The article points out that Han Dynasty stone reliefs reflect people's desire to be blessed by gods and get rid of fear after death by depicting scenes in real life and beliefs in gods and ghosts. (Liu Yanfeng, 2021, p.28-30) The article explores how Han Dynasty stone reliefs serve funeral customs by depicting life scenes and myths and legends, helping people cope with the fear of death and continuing their beliefs and ideas before death. Through the study of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the article reveals that these images are not only a record of real life, but also reflect the imagination and pursuit of life after death by people in the Han Dynasty.

The research on Han Dynasty stone relief art still has some limitations. The depth and breadth of the research are insufficient. Most of the research is conducted from a single value perspective and lacks holistic research.

This study analyzes and studies the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty from multiple perspectives, including the geographical space, historical development process, and the social environment of prosperity and decline. First, the historical background of the Han Dynasty is analyzed, which helps researcher understand the social function and cultural significance of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty. Through

comparative analysis, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty in different regions has significant differences in subject matter, expression techniques and artistic style. The conclusion is that this difference is closely related to the local cultural background and economic conditions. The reasons for the prosperity of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty are multifaceted and closely related to the political, economic and cultural environment at that time. The centralized political stability, economic prosperity, the popularity of lavish burials, and the influence of Confucianism and Taoist beliefs in the Han Dynasty all provided a solid foundation for the development of stone relief art. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, due to political turmoil, economic recession, cultural changes and changes in funeral customs, the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty gradually declined and was eventually replaced by other forms of art.

Compared with the above studies, the researcherrs have expanded and deepened this study. But there are still some shortcomings. The study is limited to the development of Chinese Han Dynasty stone relief art. If can make a simple comparative analysis with the art of other civilizations in the world at the same time, should have a more comprehensive understanding of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

6.2.2 Discussion on the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art

Peng Chen pointed out in "Han Stone Relief and Han Dynasty Culture" that the emergence of Han stone reliefs was closely related to the establishment and spread of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, Confucianism became the official ideology, and stone reliefs became a tool for "cultivating education and helping human relations" in this process. During the Eastern Han Dynasty, stone reliefs became more popular due to the emperor's admiration for Confucianism. The family model in the Eastern Han Dynasty changed, and family relationships became closer. This change in family structure promoted the popularization of stone reliefs in tombs, and stone relief tombs became an important means of expressing family values (Peng Chen, 2012, p.123-124).

In the article "The Reflection of Han Dynasty Costume Culture in Nanyang Han

Dynasty Stone Reliefs" (Chen Feng, 2014, p.51-52), Chen Feng analyzed the artistic style, modeling style, clothing system, and clothing aesthetic consciousness of the costumes of the characters in Nanyang Han Dynasty stone reliefs. Through these analyses, the article reveals the characteristics of Han Dynasty costume culture, especially the unique costume style shown in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang. The article explores the development of Han Dynasty costume art in modeling, color, decoration and craftsmanship, and analyzes how the costumes in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs in Nanyang reflect the integration of Chu culture and Qin culture, showing the dual characteristics of the majestic and mysterious costumes of the Han Dynasty. The article also analyzes the Han Dynasty crown and clothing system reflected in the Nanyang Han Dynasty stone reliefs, how to distinguish identity and occupation level through the wearing of crowns and clothes and show the social hierarchy system of the Han Dynasty. The article pays special attention to the depiction of the costumes of the working class in the Nanyang Han Dynasty stone reliefs, analyzes how these images fill the gaps in the study of Han Dynasty costume culture, and shows the diversity and functionality of the costumes of Han Dynasty workers.

Wang Wanyao discussed the influence of Chu culture on Han Dynasty stone reliefs in his article " On the Influence of Chuci Culture on Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" (Wang Wanyao, 2010, p.245-225), pointing out that with the expansion of Chu's power, Chu culture left a deep mark in these areas. Especially in Nanyang, the influence of Chu culture is obvious, and traces of Chu culture can be seen from the content and expression of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. The article analyzes the superstitious thoughts of the Han people reflected in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, especially those related to burial customs. Through a specific analysis of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the article reveals the extensive influence of Chu culture on Han Dynasty stone relief art and Han culture and emphasizes the important position of Chu culture in Han Dynasty culture.

Zhao Yaoshuang. (2003). Social customs of the Han Dynasty as seen from the historical stories inscribed on Han Dynasty stone reliefs (Zhao Yaoshuang , 2003 , P.15-

17) studied the contents of the artistic stories in Han Dynasty stone reliefs and introduced the excellent moral customs of the Han Dynasty.

Through literature search, researcher found that there are few articles on the artistic and cultural value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and only some articles related to cultural influence. Therefore, this chapter is very necessary to study the artistic and cultural value of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, especially in the context of China's new socialist era, emphasizing the creative transformation of traditional culture and the policy of innovative development, and further exploring the value of Chinese traditional culture. The research in this article shows that Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only a faithful record of the material life of Han Dynasty society, but also a symbol of Han Dynasty spiritual culture and social interaction. As an important carrier of Han Dynasty culture, these stone reliefs not only provide us with rich materials for understanding Han Dynasty society, but also provide valuable historical resources and inspiration for contemporary cultural construction and cultural innovation.

The shortcoming is that there are relatively few materials available. Compared with the hundreds of years of development of Han Dynasty stone relief art, a lot of information must have been lost. This requires more extensive material collection in the future to make a more comprehensive study of the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

6.2.3 Discussion on the Art of Han Dynasty Stone Relief from an Aesthetic Perspective

Chang Junrui pointed out in " Cultural Connotation and Aesthetic Value of Han Dynasty Stone Portraits " (Chang Junrui , 2010) that the art of Han Dynasty stone portraits embodies the style of romanticism, especially in the expression of myths and legends and the ideal world, which is full of fantasy and exaggeration, showing the rich imagination and romantic feelings of the Han people. The creation of Han Dynasty stone portraits was influenced by the multicultural society of the Han Dynasty, especially the integration of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. These ideas not only

affected the content selection of stone portraits, but also affected their expression form and aesthetic style. It is also pointed out that the production and dissemination of stone portraits reflect the development of the social hierarchy and tomb culture of the Han Dynasty, showing the importance of the society at that time to the afterlife and the deep feelings of ancestor worship. Han Dynasty stone portraits are not only the crystallization of artistic creation, but also an important form of expression of Han Dynasty social culture, with profound cultural connotations and unique aesthetic value. Liang Zhe, and Wang Anxia . (2009). " A Brief Analysis of the Artistic Characteristics of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs in Nanyang " (Liang Zhe, and Wang Anxia , 2009, p.217-217) Sun Yicun . (2000). " Aesthetic Implications of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs in Nanyang " (Sun Yicun , 2000, p.9-10) and Wang Na 's < Ideal Space of Han Style - Han Stone Relief Space > (Wang Na, 2017, p. 205-208) both explored the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty from a certain aspect, but were not in-depth enough and lacked new perspectives and multi-level research. In comparison, this study has the following innovations and shortcomings:

Innovation: First, this study innovatively combines contemporary Chinese aesthetics with the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art, breaking through the limitations of previous studies that simply relied on Western aesthetics or traditional Chinese aesthetics. This combination makes the study closer to the cultural context of modern China and can more comprehensively interpret the aesthetic forms and aesthetic ideas in Han Dynasty stone relief art.

Secondly, the study adopts Mr. Ye Lang's aesthetic concept and analyzes the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty into three levels: carving technology and materials, artistic form, and content. This hierarchical analysis method enables the study to systematically and deeply reveal the complexity and multi-level nature of the stone relief art of the Han Dynasty, focusing not only on the technical and artistic aspects, but also deeply exploring the ideological and cultural connotations carried by the works.

Thirdly, because the researcher themselves are engaged in artistic creation, they

are more sensitive to aesthetic forms and are more meticulous and in-depth in their analysis of the aesthetic forms of Han Dynasty stone relief art. For example, in terms of composition analysis, the study explored in detail the application of various composition methods such as layered composition, screen composition, nine-square grid and its derivative composition. This diversified analysis of composition forms not only enriches the understanding of Han Dynasty stone relief art, but also provides new perspectives and inspiration for modern art creation.

Finally, the study emphasizes cultural independence and originality in the context of globalization through the perspective of contemporary Chinese aesthetics. This perspective is particularly important in the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art, which helps to adhere to the unique perspective of local culture in the research process and avoid the marginalization of local culture.

Disadvantages: Although Chinese contemporary aesthetics provides a new perspective for research, its application scope is mainly focused on the combination of Chinese traditional culture and modern social reality. For some parts involving Western aesthetic theories, the research still needs more in-depth exploration and comparison to ensure the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

When discussing carving techniques and materials, research focuses more on the macro level, and there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the details of specific technical operations and how these techniques affect the expression of artistic forms. This may limit a deeper understanding of the craftsmanship of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

In general, this study innovatively provides new research perspectives and methods by introducing contemporary Chinese aesthetics into the study of Han Dynasty stone relief art. However, there is still room for improvement in the in-depth analysis of technical details and cultural connotations. In future research, the breadth of comparative analysis can be further expanded, and the discussion on the impact of specific technical operations on artistic expression can be strengthened.

6.2.4 Discussion on the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on

contemporary Chinese art creation

In this chapter, the theme of "artistic influence" is focused on, and the profound artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation is discussed in depth. Domestic scholar Xu Yushan 's " On the Artistic Influence of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs" (Xu Yushan, 2021, p.30-33) and Liu Xingzhen's article " On the Inheritance and Development of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs " (Liu Xingzhen , 1993 , p19-24) have made detailed discussions on the historical background of Han Dynasty stone relief art and its status in Chinese art history. This in-depth background analysis provides a solid foundation for understanding the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and helps readers understand the evolution and inheritance of this art form from a historical perspective.

Wang Xiuhua emphasized the influence of Nanyang Han Dynasty stone reliefs on modern painting art in his literature. This exploration of the connection between traditional art and modern art demonstrates the continued influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in contemporary art. This cross-temporal and spatial artistic connection provides a new perspective for understanding the inheritance and innovation of Chinese art (Wang Xiuhua , 2012 , p. 47-49) .

Wen Xin discussed the specific forms of Han Dynasty decorative arts in his article “ On the Influence of Han Dynasty Decorative Arts on Chinese Decorative Arts ” , especially the influence of decorative arts on later art. This detailed analysis helps to deeply understand the specific characteristics of Han Dynasty art forms and their application in later art (Wen Xin, 2010 , p. 168-168).

Most of these documents focus on analyzing the influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs from the perspective of Chinese art history, but rarely involve specific research . Although Wang Xiuhua emphasized the connection between Han Dynasty stone reliefs and modern painting art, overall, there are few case studies in these documents. For example, the analysis of specific artists or artworks is not in-depth, which affects readers ' understanding of the actual application of Han Dynasty stone reliefs in

contemporary art.

In general, these documents have certain advantages in exploring the historical background, artistic forms and influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on modern art, especially in exploring the connection between traditional and modern art. However, they also have some shortcomings, such as lack of diversified perspectives, insufficient case analysis, lack of global context and methodological limitations.

This study analyzes the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary art creation in terms of aesthetic form through multiple cases, and clearly points out the specific influences in those aspects. It also analyzes how it injects profound cultural connotations into contemporary art at the ideological level. Through in-depth analysis, the researcher have proved that the inspiration of Han Dynasty stone relief art to contemporary art is not only reflected in the technical level, but also involves how to express the meaning hidden on the surface of art through art. This study is conducive to promoting the diversification and innovation of Chinese contemporary art, strengthening the presence of traditional culture in contemporary art, and providing a case with reference value for the development of the international art world.

The shortcomings of this study are as follows: First, the discussion on the impact of globalization is insufficient. Although this study mentions the development of Chinese contemporary art in the context of globalization, the specific impact of globalization on Chinese contemporary art is not discussed in depth. Secondly, the case study of artists is not in-depth enough, and more systematic research on representative artists should be conducted. Finally, since qualitative research is relatively subjective, future research should appropriately add quantitative research and collect more visual information to support the argument to make it more convincing.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations for applying research results

To better realize the value of this research and maximize its role, it is

recommended that the application of research results be divided into the following parts:

(1) In the field of inheriting and protecting local cultural heritage, government agencies can use these research results as an important reference to guide the inheritance and promotion of relevant local cultural heritage. The analysis of the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art in this study can provide theoretical support for the effective inheritance and promotion of local cultural heritage.

(2) The application of these research results in the academic field is also significant. This study uses the concept of artistic influence to explore how contemporary Chinese artists reinterpret and integrate the elements of Han Dynasty stone relief art in contemporary creation, revealing the innovative combination of traditional and contemporary art. This approach can inspire more contemporary Chinese artists to better inherit Chinese local culture and create new artistic styles through learning and drawing on traditional culture.

(3) Research on the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art provides important cultural resources for the development of modern cultural and creative industries. By applying its rich artistic and cultural connotations to product design, film and television creation, game development, tourism and digital culture, it can not only promote the innovation and development of cultural and creative industries, but also bring significant economic and social benefits.

(4) By promoting the research results on the aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, the general public can improve their artistic aesthetic ability and enhance their appreciation of works of art, which has a positive significance for enriching their spiritual life. Promoting the cultural value of Han Dynasty stone relief art can help the public better understand and recognize ancient Chinese culture. By displaying and promoting these research results, the public's interest in traditional Chinese culture can be stimulated and their cultural literacy can be improved.

6.3.2 Suggestions for further research

To deepen the study of the cultural value, aesthetics and artistic influence of Han

Dynasty stone relief art on Chinese contemporary art and promote the progress of this field, future research work should focus on the following key areas.

(1) Interdisciplinary research

Cultural anthropology perspective: From the perspective of cultural anthropology, study the social and cultural structure of the Han Dynasty and people's spiritual life as reflected in the stone reliefs, and explore the human behavior, religious beliefs and social rituals behind them.

(2) Comparative study

Comparative study with other cultures: Comparative study of Han Dynasty stone reliefs with the stone carving art of other ancient civilizations, such as ancient Egypt and Greece, to explore the similarities and differences between different cultures in artistic expression, symbol use and religious beliefs, and enhance the understanding of global ancient art.

(3) Expanding the research area

The study extends the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs to other regions and cultures and explores their dissemination channels and artistic influence in East Asia and even the wider cultural circle.

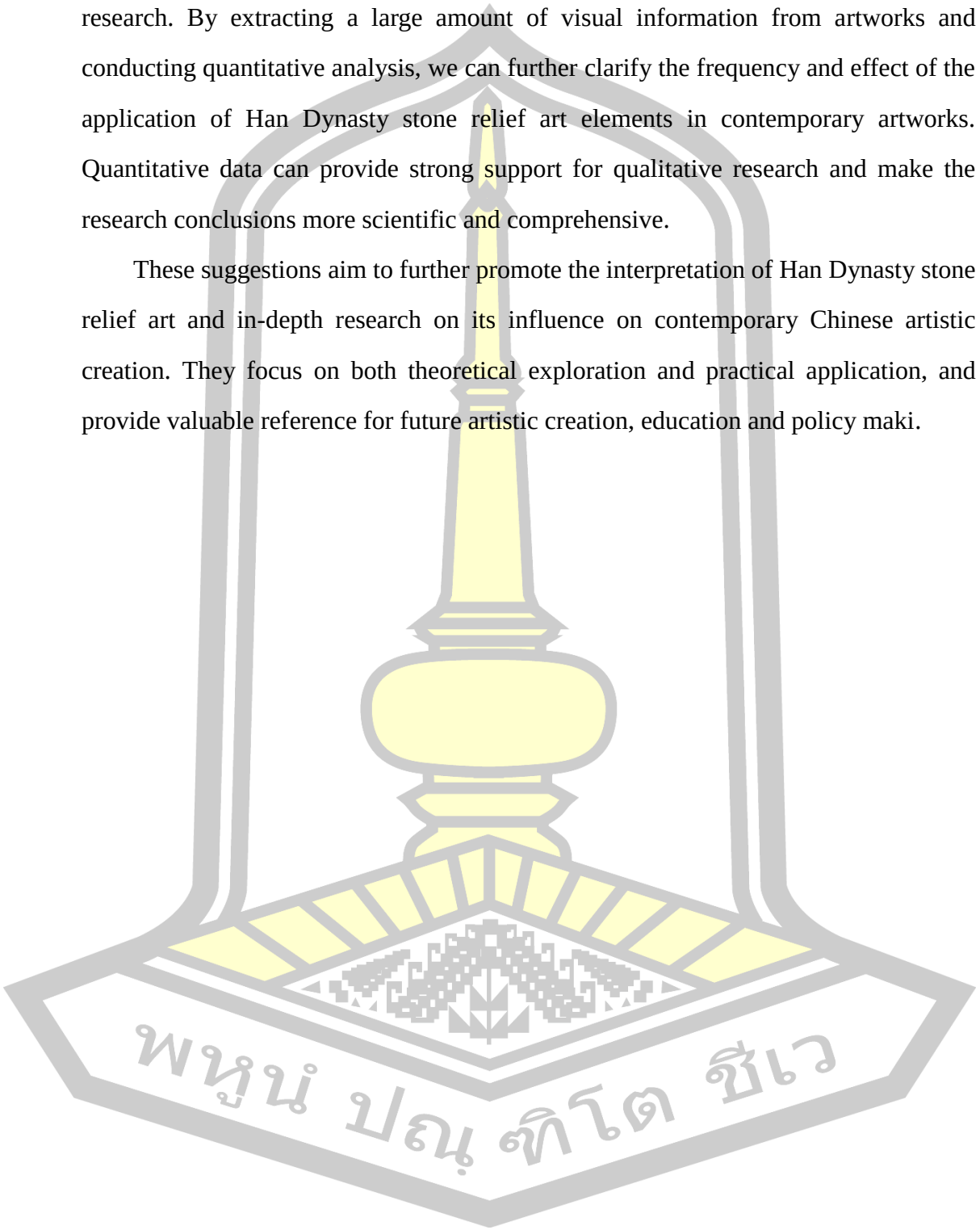
(4) Application in culture and education

Research on how to integrate the cultural value and aesthetic characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs into the contemporary education system, from basic education to higher education, and promote the inheritance and development of Chinese culture through curriculum design, textbook compilation, museum education and other means.

(5) Given that contemporary Chinese artists often draw on Western artistic techniques, it is recommended to further study specific cases of the integration of Chinese and Western art. In particular, it is possible to explore how to achieve the organic integration of traditional Chinese art and Western art through the reinterpretation of Han Dynasty stone relief art in the context of globalization, and form a contemporary art style with Chinese characteristics.

(6) Future research can try to combine qualitative analysis with quantitative research. By extracting a large amount of visual information from artworks and conducting quantitative analysis, we can further clarify the frequency and effect of the application of Han Dynasty stone relief art elements in contemporary artworks. Quantitative data can provide strong support for qualitative research and make the research conclusions more scientific and comprehensive.

These suggestions aim to further promote the interpretation of Han Dynasty stone relief art and in-depth research on its influence on contemporary Chinese artistic creation. They focus on both theoretical exploration and practical application, and provide valuable reference for future artistic creation, education and policy maki.



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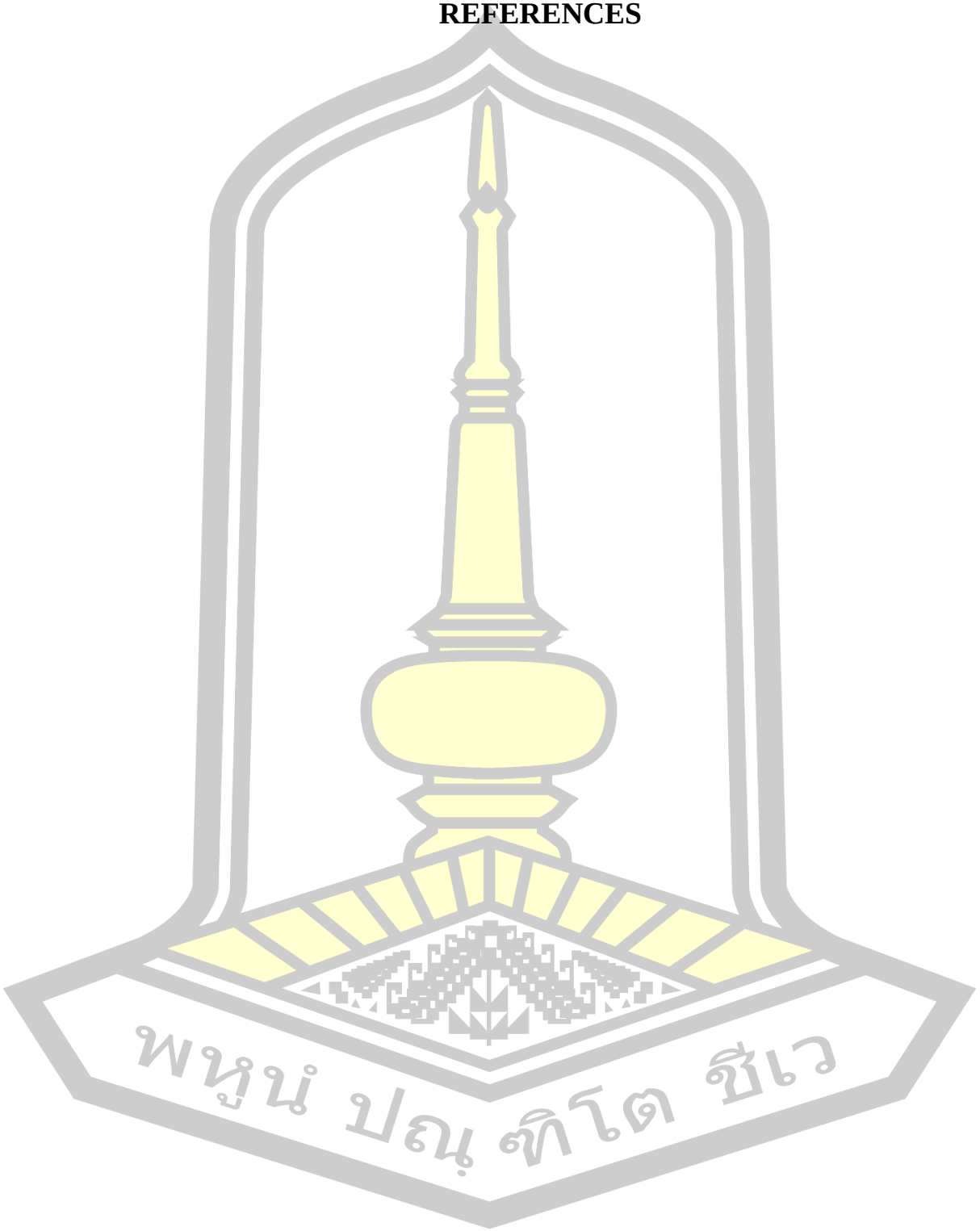

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