



The Design Style of Tang Dynasty Gold and Silverware from the Gilt Double Fox Pattern Double Peach-shaped Silver Plate

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Abstract: The Tang Dynasty was the heyday of China's economic development, and countless brilliant and elegant gold and silver objects became an important testimony to the splendid and colorful culture of the Tang Dynasty. The gold and silver wares of this period were chic in shape, beautifully decorated, rich in subject matter and very characteristic of the times in design. This is inseparable from the economy, culture and thought of the Tang Dynasty. This paper starts from the gilt double fox pattern double peach-shaped silver plate excavated from Hejiacun in the Tang Dynasty, and briefly analyzes the design characteristics of the gold and silver wares in the Tang Dynasty and the important factors influencing their design styles.

Keywords: Gold and silver; Design style; Gilt double fox pattern double peach shaped silver plate

1. The rise of gold and silver in the Tang Dynasty

With the arrival of the Tang Dynasty, under the support of the powerful state power of the Tang Dynasty, the manufacture of gold and silver utterly got rid of its previous status as a subsidiary decoration of other objects, and began to become a class of crafts that could not be ignored. Tang Dynasty gold and silver production technology is high, exquisite decoration, a wide range of categories can be described as unprecedented. The Tang Dynasty was the most open country in the world at that time, through years of foreign trade and inter-ethnic exchanges, a large number of gold and silver with Western style into China, in the Chinese and Western cultural blend and collision, gold and silver ware formed both rich and luxurious and full of exotic features, become the most influential handicrafts at that time.

The rise of gold and silverware in the Tang Dynasty was not accidental, The early Tang Dynasty and to the Sheng Tang period, in the excellent craftsmen from all over the country and the support of sufficient raw materials, the production of gold and silver regardless of cost, the work has a very high level of technology. To the middle and late Tang dynasty, the economic center of gravity shifted south, the supply of gold and silver raw materials depend on the south, the emergence of the royal workshops and local government workshops private workshops coexist prosperous scene, the number of gold and silver ware in this period rose sharply.

2. Design features of a gilt double fox pattern double peach shaped silver plate

2.1 Process Features

This gilt double fox pattern silver plate, now in the Shaanxi Museum, is made using two methods commonly used in the production of gold and silver vessels during the Tang dynasty, namely the pounding method and the gilding method. The silver plate is in the shape of two peaches, with a walking fox on the bottom of each plate, one fox looking down and the other looking up, both foxes showing an alert demeanor, the neck and abdomen of the fox engraved with fine lines, and the whole body gilt. The fox's neck and abdomen are engraved in gilt.

Before the Tang dynasty, gold and silver often as a precious and luxurious decorations are applied to other crafts, and in the Tang dynasty, gold and silver crafts become a professional and prominent sector of handicraft, which provides a great space for the development of gold and silver crafts, therefore, gold and silver manufacturing process is becoming more and more mature, production techniques are more and more complex and fine. Tang dynasty gold and silver production methods, according to the "Tang six canon" records, a single gold processing methods have 14 kinds, the country has a gold pit, gold field 14, silver field 56, the richness of the Tang dynasty can be seen, the use of precious metals also to a certain extent reflects the prosperous economic situation of the dynasty.

2.2 Design style

The shape of the silver plate resembles a connected double peach, hammered and shaped with a narrow edge, shallow belly and flat bottom. In addition to the colorful silver plates of the Tang Dynasty, there are also diamond-shaped plates, sunflower-shaped plates, begonia-shaped plates and other kinds of shaped plates imitating plant forms, which is in line with the general trend of the development of art in the Tang Dynasty. Among them, the shaped plates are the most characteristic ones, whose artistry exceeds the practicality of the objects, such as the lotus leaf-shaped silver plate and the leaf-shaped silver plate, and this double peach-shaped silver plate is also one of the representative works.

The plate is covered with undulating petals, the center of the plate is decorated with animals, and the surrounding area is left blank. This composition method is not the traditional decoration method of gold and silver in China, but is prevalent in Sassanian and Suthenian regions, especially the most popular in Suthenian regions. This group of silver plates from Hejiacun is Chinese in its choice of subject matter, although it accepts the art of Suthenian in its composition. This shows that the Tang Dynasty craftsmanship was always eclectic.

2.3 Decorative features

The silver plate is hammered with a pair of foxes walking towards each other in the center of the two peaches on the bottom of the plate. This animal design was punched out with a mold, and the design is higher than the bottom of the plate, thus having a relief effect. One fox has its ears pressed to the back of its head and its mouth facing the ground, looking back down. The other fox has its head turned upwards, with its mouth facing the sky and its eyes looking up. The two foxes are looking forward to each other with a vivid and lively attitude, which is very interesting.

In the Tang dynasty, the fox, like the dragon, phoenix, lion, rhinoceros, bear, deer and rabbit, were all auspicious animals. The use of peaches and foxes as decorative motifs catered to the traditional Chinese psychological pursuit of “warding off evil spirits” and “praying for good fortune”. It is also in line with the unique Chinese folk psychology and aesthetic interest of “longevity” and “suppressing evil and praying for good fortune”, which fully reflects the ingenuity of the artisans of the Tang Dynasty. On the basis of absorbing and learning from the Western gold and silver art, we pay attention to pushing forward the new, so that it is more in line with the Chinese use and appreciation habits, which is also the unique characteristics of the Tang Dynasty gold and silver ware.

3. Design Ideas of Tang Dynasty Gold and Silverware

3.1 The relationship between culture and design

From culture to art design, the culture of an era has a great influence on the design style of handicrafts. Culture is the cornerstone of design, but also the core of design. The elegance and style of a design work depends on whether it has a certain cultural heritage. The culture of the times given in the design is the most important meaning of the existence of a design object. but also because the flower is a very representative motif in Buddhist culture. This is the mutual achievement of the culture of the times and the pursuit of art, and it is also an important testimony that culture and design are inseparable.

3.2 The impact of technology on art

Tang Dynasty, China's gold and silver manufacturing process reached a very high level, only the exterior of the decorative techniques are pin gold, pat gold, gold plating, weaving gold, calendaring gold, phi gold, clay gold, twist gold, bump gold, circle gold, paste gold, inlay gold, wrap gold and so on. The production generally used the techniques of wrenching, casting, welding, cutting, polishing, riveting, plating, hammering, burin engraving, hollowing and other craft techniques. The gilding process used in the silver plate in the gilt double fox pattern double peach shaped silver plate is to mix gold and mercury in the ratio of 1:5 to 1:7 to become a paste, apply it to the surface of the object and then fire it, when the mercury evaporates in the heat, only a layer of gold remains, hence the name gilt. This technique is extremely common in gold and silver objects excavated during the Tang Dynasty, which shows that the craftsmen of the time were very skilled in gilding techniques.

4. Summary

The Tang Dynasty, as the heyday of China's feudal society, produced so many wonderful, Tang Sancai, gold and silver ware, a variety of weaving and dyeing techniques, etc., which provided a solid technical foundation and innovative direction for the development of later generations of handicrafts. In terms of gold and silverware, the Tang Dynasty had a wide variety of wares, including incense cases, relics, coffins and Buddhist vessels, which were not found in previous generations. The decorative patterns were also influenced by religious beliefs and Chinese and Western cultures, becoming more diverse. The production techniques are exquisite, the craft variety is rich, and the design has unique cultural connotation. It can be said that the gold and silver craft of the Tang Dynasty represents the highest level of ancient Chinese metal craft, whether it is the technical process, or cultural spirit is the ancient Chinese gold and silver craft history is an extremely gorgeous and eye-catching. This is the wealth left to us by the Tang Dynasty, but also to our national pride.

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