

On the Visual Symbols of Dian Bronze Animal Decoration

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Abstract: Among the animal patterns on the bronzes of the Dian Kingdom, the cow and the snake are the most common and representative visual symbols. They have strong visual tension, expressiveness and artistic appeal, showing the unique artistic aesthetics and ideas of the ancients of Dian Kingdom, and They all have specific meanings and contexts. This article mainly explores the decorative symbols of animal decorations in Yunnan bronzes, and uses “ox” and “snakes” as the main objects to analyze semantics and context. **Methods:** This article first elaborates on the types and decorations of ancient Dian bronzes, and then elaborates on the characteristics and symbolic meanings of cow and snake patterns by listing some representative Dian bronzes; finally, it is in-depth with the semantics and context of visual symbols. **Analysis. Result:** The types of animal images on the bronze ware of Yunnan culture are rich and diverse, and each animal has different shapes and forms, and has its own symbolic meaning and function. This also reveals the relationship between man and nature from the side, reflecting the ancient people of Yunnan’s sacrifices and sacrifices. The social and economic conditions such as hunting and breeding record the trivial life of the ancients. The animal decoration art of the Dian Kingdom has a very strong ethnic customs and regional characteristics. It depicts the intense scenes of animal daily life and fighting in detail. The animal’s shape, demeanor and own characteristics are all vividly shaped, with a strong artistic atmosphere and visual tension. To a large extent reflects the aesthetic concept and ideological pursuit of the ancients of Dian Kingdom. **Conclusion:** The two visual symbols of the cow pattern and the snake pattern are the records of the people of the ancient Dian kingdom on nature and life, and they also carry the ancient people’s feelings for nature. They reflect the religious beliefs and ideas of the ancient Dian civilization and have local characteristics and customs. , It is the spiritual sustenance of the ancient Dian people to seek advantages and avoid disadvantages.

Keywords: Dian Bronze Animal Decoration; Visual Symbols

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1. An overview of animal decorations on ancient Dian bronzes

Since the golden seal of the King of Yunnan was excavated in Shizhai Mountain of Jinning in 1957, ancient Dian bronzes have been unearthed one after another, gradually unveiling the mystery of the ancient Dian Kingdom, and showing the colorful and unique Dian culture to future generations. Dian bronzes developed from the Warring States Period to the Qin and Han Dynasties. They are unique to the Southwestern Yi. The ancients carved decorative paintings and three-dimensional sculptures with a certain symbolic significance on the bronzes, showing distinct and unique national characteristics. There are many types of ancient Dian bronzes. The most common ones are shell containers, bronze drums, weapons and other bronze production tools, living utensils and textile tools.

1.1 Cow pattern

Compared with the totem-like bronze patterns in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties in the Central Plains, the animal patterns on Dian bronzes appear more vivid, real and simple. The types and dynamics of various animals have a unique Dian cultural charm. Through research on the types of decorative animals, the images of cows and snakes are the most cumbersome and important, and they have repeatedly participated in the state of other animals, such as snakes eating cows. “It vividly shows the fierce scene of the struggle between man and the cow. The entire buckle is unique and dynamic. The image of the cow fighting fiercely is vividly portrayed. The villain on both sides of the cow is fighting hard to tame the cow. Facial expressions It has also been shaped in detail. It can be said that cattle and humans have come from ancient times. They are the main objects for people to cultivate and eat. They are also one of the earliest large animals trained by humans. Therefore, the frequency of cattle appearing on the Yunnan bronzes is undoubtedly the highest. It is the leader and prosperous for a time, and it occupies a certain important historical position in the cultural history of China and the world.

1.2 Serpentine

Snake patterns are often used in decorative patterns due to their convoluted shapes. Their patterns and decorations are very strong, and they often appear in three-dimensional animal bites. In terms of quantity, the frequency of snake patterns is second only to cattle.

The snakes on the bronzes of the Dian Kingdom are divided into three main categories according to their shapes: the first category is the shape of a round sculpture, such as the snake button on the gold seal of the King of Yunnan. The shape of the snake on the gold seal is curled up, and the whole snake body is covered with gold. The scales on the snake button are clearly visible, giving people a sense of nobility and grandeur. The snake is used as the only decoration on the national treasure, which shows the important position of the snake in the ancient Dian culture.

The second type is embossed, mainly decorated with animal fighting buckles, including “tiger and snake offering pillar”, “bird pecking snake”, “snake biting bull ear” and other fierce fighting scenes, although many scholars believe that realism should be used in realism. The naturalistic form interprets the true storyline. The appearance of these scenes often appears in a way that is not clear. This is thought-provoking: in the process of portraying animal fighting scenes, the ancient Dian people did not only have a narrative meaning, but a deep meaning. Hidden symbolic meaning of levels; the third type of plane shape is often combined with other geometric patterns to form a complete pattern, such as often appearing in sword sheaths, armors, copper pillows, sword hilts and other places. These three types of decorations have the characteristics of vivid modeling, incomparable image and lifelikeness, and the snake pattern has a certain symbolic significance. According to the research of experts and scholars, the ancient people in Yunnan considered snakes to be a ubiquitous cold-blooded animal and attacked them. The sex is extremely strong and poses a direct threat to human life and property. Therefore, the ancient people developed a kind of awe of snakes and worshiped it as a totem. In short, the snake pattern is the most classic and representative artifact among the bronzes of the Kingdom of Yunnan. Except for the golden seal of the King of Yunnan, most of the artifacts have local characteristics and can be divided into regional bronze culture in detail.

2. Research on visual symbols of Yunnan bronzes

2.1 Interpretation of Semantics

A symbol is a unique identifier that considers the objective world and has a certain symbolic meaning. The symbol itself is a signal that can convey certain specific information to people. The extension and connotation of the symbol constitute the semantics of the symbol, and the extension is the surface meaning of the symbol. For example, the surface meaning of the symbol of “bull” is itself, specifically referring to the animal “cow”; and the connotation is the underlying semantics, such as the connotation of “bull” It refers to offering sacrifices and praying to gods to bless people, to bless the ancients and to eliminate disasters and blessings. The cow itself is a symbol of wealth. Therefore, eating beef is not only for the stomach, but also for gaining wealth. This is also the most common type of cattle. Connotative meaning. The animal decoration of ancient Dian bronzes is a refinement of the ancient Dian people’s observation and characteristics of the external images of real animals. The shapes of animals are summarized with concise and vivid lines, and the expressions of animals, animals and other details are described in detail with certain expression techniques. , Through the reproduction of reality by artistic means, there are double meanings of extension and connotation like symbols.

2.2 Interpretation of Context

It is not accidental that the images of cows and snakes appear on ancient Dian bronzes. The meaning of symbols is inseparable from specific situations and contexts. As a visual symbol, unique animal decorations are closely related to the time and social background they live in. If you want to interpret the context in detail, you must experience the context of the symbol in depth, consider and understand it in connection with the background of the times, in order to grasp the connotation of the visual symbol in the true sense.

From the perspective of natural environment and geographical location, Yunnan is in the central and eastern parts of Yunnan Province. The climate in Yunnan is mostly hot and humid. Among them, snakes like humid rainforest environment, so it is a common existence. People of Yunnan hunt or do activities outside. You can often see snakes at times; and the cow in Yunnan bronze is mostly a zebu. From the physical characteristics, the zebu can maintain a normal body temperature in the subtropical region and can adapt to the hot and humid climate. Therefore, in this environment Snakes and zebras are common animals, creating the characteristics of the diversity of animal decorations on bronzes in Yunnan.

From the perspective of the social environment, war and sacrifice were the top priority in ancient times. War was the survival need to defend the territory and ensure the safety of the people, while sacrifice was the spiritual need to stabilize people’s hearts and pray for peace and security, and sacrifices were mainly carried out by offering food. Because the productivity of ancient society was extremely low, it was mainly carried out by artificial labor such as stone tools, and all meat was less. Therefore, meat was very precious at that time. Zebu’s meat was extremely delicious and was a popular poultry, so it was also a sacrifice. The main victim of the zebu has a very high social status. It is not only the main body of the sacrifice, but also a symbol of the lofty status and finances of the slave owner. Today, the Wa people in Yunnan area will also cut off the cow heads and hang them. They will be specially preserved and hung on roofs, forbidden areas and other places. The number of cow heads is used to express their social status and economic strength, as well as forbidden areas. Inviolable level.

Snakes also play an important and irreplaceable role in the Yunnan civilization. There are two explanations for snake patterns. The first is the worship and awe of snakes by the people of Yunnan, such as reproduction and totem worship, due to the extremely aggressive nature of snakes. Strong, it directly threatens the safety of human life. Therefore, the people of Yunnan hope to avoid being attacked by snakes by worshipping snakes. The second type is that snakes represent gods, such as earth gods and agricultural lights. Many farm tools are imitating snakes. The appearance of the product is a special existence.

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