

The General Evolution of the Function of Ancient Ear Ornaments--Explain by Specific Example

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ABSTRACT. *ear ornaments are closely related to the ancient ornaments, in the primitive era of low social productivity, how the ear ornaments were produced, and then developed into fine jewelry, this process not only restores the development of ear art, It is also of great significance for exploring the behavior of human society.*

KEYWORDS: *Ear ornaments; Function; Sacrificial; Decoration*

1. Introduction

As early as in the very primitive period of human beings know how to decorate themselves with some natural matter, Such as ores, animal bones(1-1), coal dusts and shells ,etc.in china's ancient land is no exception, early culture such as the north has” red mountain culture”, etc, The south has a “liangzhu culture” all over the unearthed a large number of circular ancient ornaments called “Jade Jue”(1-2). Most archeological experts believe that gaped ancient ornaments are often unearthed in the ear of the tomb's owner, which can be seen as ear ornaments.

The ancients worshipped nature, in Darwin did not have the scientific “biological evolution”, many parts of the people are thought to be created by God, so no matter what region will have myths spread to date, then there will be a certain amount of material and material to sacrifice mountains and rivers. If these ornaments are used as ceremonial devices, they are one of the mediums used by the ancients to communicate God, and the ear is an important organ of the human body's perception of the outside world.

With this reason for sacrifice, a series of sacrificial activities would follow. “The *three-star heap culture* “unearthed in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, is considered to be the representative of Chinese witchcraft culture, It is also one of the most outstanding religious sacrificial cultures in the world and the mask unearthed in Guanghan City is a ritual used in the sacrifice of the mysterious ancient kingdom, some of which are worn with ear holes, indicating that the ear is considered to be an important organ of communication with God in the Neolithic period, and is considered to serve the religious role.

Original earrings are generally mainly round and without too many shapes, and later with the promotion of the craft, the circular basis carved other lines and the shape of the legend is full of mythical creature or dragon, very exquisite(1-3). In the case of low social productivity, the circular ear ornaments shaped like a dragon is more symbolize a symbol of ability. The ancient people hoped to have a strong power like a dragon, which was their hope for a better life. For example, a large number of circular “Bi” later unearthed is containing a variety of social content and similar to the shape of the “Jue” also take into account the special social content.

2. Evolution in Different Historical Periods

The function of the ear ornaments changed during the Shang Zhou period, because in Zhou Dynasty, the establishment of the “ceremony” system, advocating natural and not pay attention to carving or decorating, especially wearing ear ornaments need to pierce the ears lobe, must destroy the integrity of the body, Ancient people believed that the body hair skin is given by parents, this behavior is not accepted by the system of the ceremony at that time, so ear ornaments in a long period of time as ornaments is not common, But unearthed “Jue” are perforated as a device buried and placed beside the grave owner’s ear.

A perforated earring indicates that a silk thread has been threaded through the ear ornament, but the wire has long been decayed, because the original people early with the wire to wear shells, animal teeth and other substances as neck ornaments to decorated themselves. And unearthed a variety of kinds of pendants made of different materials and thread of the pendant earrings developed into jewelry with pendants, called “Tian”, is present in China's Crown suit system ①. In the Tang Dynasty, The portrait of Qin Shihuang in the crown ornaments are also clearly seen, in the two long earrings hanging clearly on the sides of the hat, can always hit the ears, can always hit the ears, The goal is to remind the ancient emperors to be careful, do not listen to the words, is a kind of etiquette supplies. And most are can be stuffed into the ear, and earplugs have the same role, so some of them are also used as burial jade, so until the main function of Qin Dynasty ear ornaments is more than the role of decoration.

The custom of wearing ears during the Han Dynasty is still not very popular, this period of ear ornaments are not limited to the wear of the ear, is developed into a combination of tweezers and pendants, take shape the ribbon in the female hair, this wear is a major sacrificial ceremony used ②. There are ear-wearing customs of the region is mainly distributed in the north of the minority, such as the Han Dynasty unearthed ethnic minority earrings, such as the City Wulanchabu Museum in the collection of the East Han Dynasty circle-shaped gold earrings ③(1-5).It belongs to XianBei nationality earring. The process of making this earring is a slightly thick piece of gold cut from both sides into fine strips, and then rolled into a roll, indicating that at that time has attached importance to the beautiful design of the ear ornaments, began to change from a certain functional color effect to decorative role.

Han Dynasty also appeared a special ear ornament - Ear Dang(1-4), the shape of

this ear piece is two ends is cylindrical, the middle is the waist-shaped, such as the Hunan Provincial Museum collected gold Ear Dang, because of this type of ear ornament shape when wearing a large ear hole, ear ornament body is not perforated, so hanging on the ear is not likely, But is used for direct ear piercing, because the Central Plains region does not wear the custom of ear, in the Han Dynasty, “the name of the release jewelry” clearly stated that the ear piece used to punish minority women, Compared with women in central China, women in minority areas behave more freely. Once they behave inappropriately, they will wear the thick earring through their earlobes to punish them with pain. so the ear is introduced by ethnic minorities, is accompanied by a kind of punishment and the emergence of artifacts.

With the opening of the Silk Road, the exchanges between China and the West influence each other deeply and frequently, Wei Jin North and South Dynasties, with the introduction of foreign culture, decorative style was affected, such as Shanxi Province, Datong City unearthed gold tassel eardrop of the North Wei (1-7). Tang Dynasty is the most prosperous period in the history of the ancient world, the status of women in the Tang Dynasty is higher, will not easily damage their own skin, the customs of wearing ears still appear in some northern nomadic ethnic areas. And unearthed earrings are with exotic styles, For example, now in Yangzhou museum, embedded Jewelry gold earrings^④, comparison the earring period unearthed and excavated the Shanxi Province, Datong City unearthed gold tassel eardrop of the North Wei dynasty earrings are not far apart in historical period, with shape similar to the body of both earrings is through a hollow sphere and long beaded tassel pendant. Although it is not popular to wear ear in the central plains, unearthed from the historical period style of earrings exotic features, therefore the Tang dynasty is still mainly ear ornaments function as decorations appeared in history, and is affected by foreign culture .It can be seen that earring is the product of mutual influence under the world history and culture exchange, and is the witness of the communication between China and The West through the silk road in Tang dynasty.

Some ethnic minorities in northern China have always had ear-worn customs, such as National Khitan or Nüzhen, an ancient nationality in China, both of which have their own national power, the history and culture are higher than other ethnic minorities, and are in the same historical period as the Song Dynasty. In “Big Jin Guozhi”, it is also clear that the Nüzhen people is with ear ornaments, especially men, from the unearthed gold tomb ear ornaments to see that most of the earrings are nobles, indicating that this period for ethnic minorities as jewelry, there is a certain status of wealth symbol. For example, in Heilongjiang Province, A Cheng City Jin Qi King finished the tomb of a pair of gold earrings unearthed, when unearthed is located in the tomb owner's left and right ears each one. This ear piece is gold, surrounded by gold and bead, the middle inlaid pearl has come off ^⑤.As a result, in the minds of minority people, earrings is a symbol of wealth, a representative of status, to a certain extent, ear ornaments function is a way of storing wealth.

3. Reflecting the Social Landscape of Different Dynasties

Song Dynasty was established by the Han regime, has a deep-rooted traditional culture, such as “ Neo-Confucianism ” is the main ruling thought of the Song Dynasty, there is a certain code of conduct, ear ornaments as the Song Dynasty women's jewelry is not only its decorative role, but also take into account the reminder that women walk to pay attention to moral and behavior norms, Song Dynasty ear ornaments generally longer, Long to shoulder, if walking crooked, there will be the possibility of pricking the skin, hence in the Song Dynasty ear ornaments functions are the product of etiquette. However, well-known the culture of the Song Dynasty is very developed, literature and painting are a peak in history, in the extensive and profound painting Chinese people use ink portray a lot of vivid “interest”, melon fruit is the Song Dynasty painting indispensable “interest” object, and these paintings in the interest of the artisans as a pattern into jewelry, ear ornaments will naturally become these “Interest” becomes the carrier of “pattern”. Such as the tomb of the song dynasty in the northern suburbs of Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, the unearthed Melon-leaf shaped gold eardrop(1-6)⑥. The original body of the fruit-printed gold earrings is a large flower gold leaf, in the middle of the flower leaves decorated with two relatively small melon-shaped fruit pattern shape, the two fruits and connected and blooming flower leaves into one. In traditional culture, more or less will have people expect to have a happy scene, and these images with a beautiful meaning on the vivid and natural injection into the works of art created by the ancients, so the Song Dynasty's ear ornaments functions are not only the product of etiquette, but also the unique folk cultural expression of the Song Dynasty carrier.

This kind of woman's behavior should be dignified etiquette also influence the Ming Dynasty, consequently some of the tombs unearthed in the Ming Dynasty in the ear ornaments are also longer ears and feet, such as a pair of Gold Earrings Engraved with Flowers and Butterflies Patterns of Ming Dynasty(1-8), hidden in the Yangzhou Museum has a certain length. This pair of golden plum petals are inlaid with gemstones which earring is mainly a plum flower shape to complement the gem's sparkle, in this ear piece is the material is a slightly thick piece of gold to hold a blooming plum blossom, the edge is also based on the shape of the plum blossom, than the five petals of the plum blossom are welded round, set in a variety of colors of gemstones (partially off), add visual impact, It also takes a small plum blossom as a flower heart and is lined with rose-red gemstones, in the top of the ear ornament there is a small golden butterfly with the large plum opposite, the butterfly's back has a gem set. It's craft is very clever that earring is created with plum blossom as the theme, Since ancient times, ancient Chinese people have carried on an endless stream of poems and paintings about plum blossoms. Plum blossom is mean one of the “four gentlemen” in ancient flowers, which has a great relationship with the blooming season and the environment. Plum blossom in winter belongs to the most severe season, winter all things wither, only the plum blossom in full bloom, and the flower branches in all shapes and forms, ancient people to plum metaphor noble character, and plum flower metaphor braved the winter of hardship, this character has always been the literati yearn for. At this time, the function of earring has

changed, which is the representative of the high culture under the influence of literati's interest, and also their spiritual sustenance.

This earring is set with many precious stones, the reason of Ming emperors are fond of gemstones, with everywhere scrape a variety of gemstones, so this historical period of ear ornaments from the inside out are filled with a “pearly treasure” unique temperament. Although the earring in this historical period is mainly a combination of gemstones and exquisite craftsmanship, fully highlighting the decorative function of earring, however the decorative style of the ear ornaments is also the reaction of the political style of the time.

In a word , Ear ornament development has developed so far, contains a wealth of social connotations, the role of earrings functions continues to shift. Through small ear ornaments, not only can see the ancient an artisans exquisite skills, but also revealed different features of social history. The customs of wearing three kinds of ear ornaments in one ear in the Qing Dynasty were the ancestral system of the Manchus in the early days, the political needs of the rulers, and in order not to assimilate other peoples, it was an important symbol of the difference between one nation and the other.



Picture Note:

1-1:Bone Jue,semi-circular piece of jade(The Neolithic period).

1-2:Jade Jue,Unearthed from the Caoxieshan Site, Suzhou City; the Beiyinyangying Site,Nanjing City;the Xudun Site,Changzhou City; the Shendun Site, Liyang(The Neolithic period).

1-3:Dragon-shaped Jade Jue(Spring and Autumn period).

1-4:Gold ear Dang(The Wangmang era of the Han Dynasty).

1-5:Coiling-shaped gold earrings(During the eastern Han Dynasty).

1-6: Melon-leaf shaped gold eardrop(The Song Dynasty).

1-7:Gold eardrop (The Northern Wei Dynasty).

1-8:Gold Earrings Engraved with Flowers and Butterflies Patterns(The Ming Dynasty).

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