

# Research on the Integration, Development and Dissemination of Chinese and Western Sculpture Techniques in the Context of “the Belt and Road Initiatives”

Wenxing Yu<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Jiangmen Polytechnic, Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province, China

\*corresponding author

**Keywords:** Traditional sculpture, Line, Nationalization

**Abstract:** Traditional Chinese sculpture and Western sculpture pay attention to three-dimensionality and realism, and have similar artistic pursuits to Chinese painting. Traditional Chinese sculpture uses the depiction and draw lines as an important means of expression, showing obvious linear characteristics similar to traditional paintings in the overall shape. However, in modern times, Chinese sculpture has been deeply influenced by the realistic traditions of Western and Soviet sculptures, and has been impacted by new artistic trends, and has neglected the inheritance of traditional sculpture language in the process of development. In the context of the “The Belt and Road Initiatives” initiative to promote Chinese culture, the creation of contemporary Chinese sculptures must not only imitate ancient sculptures and learn traditional sculpture techniques, but also explore and display the excellent traditional Chinese culture on a deeper level and in a wider range.

## 1. Introduction

Chinese sculpture originated in the early Neolithic Age. In the process of polishing stone tools and firing pottery, the ancestors gradually mastered some production techniques, which gave birth to primitive aesthetic concepts. Sculptures in the pre-Qin period can be divided into bronze sculptures, pottery sculptures, jade sculptures, wood sculptures, etc., with the nature of round sculptures according to different materials. During the Qin and Han dynasties, the Qin figurines represented by the Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum and the Han Dynasty pottery figurines, pottery sculptures, and stone carvings have unique shapes, and the skills of carving and sculpture have also improved. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties and Sui and Tang Dynasties, with the rise of Buddhism and Taoism, the traditional Chinese sculptures of this period were mainly religious sculptures. The large-scale sculptures and cliff statues in the large-scale cave temples were influenced by ancient India in their modeling styles. , It also integrates traditional Chinese sculpture techniques, and continues to develop in character modeling and production technology, gradually reaching the peak of technical performance. The religious sculptures of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties gradually became secularized in style and content, paying more attention to real life. Among them, the sculptures in the Ming and Qing Dynasties were not as good as the Song and Yuan Dynasties in terms of their overall technique. In modern times, traditional Chinese sculpture has been impacted by Western plastic arts, and the techniques and modeling styles of traditional Chinese sculpture have not been well inherited, especially the “line will” that traditional sculpture places great emphasis on.

## 2. The Linear Language Features of Traditional Sculpture

Throughout the history of Chinese sculpture art, traditional sculpture is deeply influenced by painting, and there is not even a strict distinction between sculpture and painting. It is believed that painting and sculpture are similar. In traditional painting theory, there is also a plastic painting garden. In this regard, the modern aesthetic master Zong Baihua has repeatedly talked about the relationship between Chinese sculpture, Chinese painting and Western sculpture. In the article

“Talking about Chinese Aesthetics”, he mentioned that Greek painting has a strong three-dimensional effect, emphasizes the protruding form, pays attention to light and shade, and seems to move sculpture to the painting. However, in China, the painting artisans occupy the main position, starting from the line. The pattern is dominant, but the sculpture has a pictorial meaning [1]. It can be seen that, like Western paintings and sculptures are mainly concrete and realistic, with a strong sense of three-dimensionality and blockiness. Chinese sculptures, like Chinese paintings, which are paying attention to the rhythm and rhythm of contour lines and clothing lines, which are all linear. As a form of expression, thread exists in sculptures such as tomb carvings and grotto statues in various periods. For example, the concave line and the convex line of the Han Dynasty stone carvings represented by Wuliang Temple. The concave line on the stone cow, stone horse, and stone tiger in the tomb of Huo Qubing, and the reliefs in the Emperor and Empress Ceremony Buddha which in the Binyang Cave of Longmen Grottoes. These wonderful, vivid and rhythmic lines in it create a variety of moving rhythms and charms.

In addition, Zong Baihua said in the Preliminary Exploration of Important Issues in the History of Chinese Aesthetics: Chinese sculptures are also like paintings. They do not emphasize three-dimensionality, but pay attention to flowing lines [2]. The lines that are full of vigor and rhythm and the full and surging shapes are integrated in the space and complement each other to form a vibrant and full of vitality. This is the most distinctive and valuable feature of Chinese carving art [3]. In terms of line performance, the lines in traditional Chinese sculpture have a painterly element, and the lines themselves are more independent, and this line corresponds to the brush used in Chinese painting and calligraphy, which is different from the general, The lines on the external phase are fundamentally different [4]. For example, in the Longmen Grottoes of Luoyang, the twenty-nine ancestor Arhats of Xitu, the entire group of statues are realistic and realistic. Arhat robes are blowing in the wind, and the shapes are mainly lines, elegant and free and easy. It can be seen from this that Chinese traditional sculpture uses depiction and depiction of lines as an important means of expression, and the overall shape presents an obvious linear feature similar to traditional painting.

### **3. Inheritance of Traditional Sculpture**

At the beginning of the 20th century, western sculpture was introduced into China, and a group of Chinese sculptors went to France to learn Western sculpture. Modern Chinese sculpture began. Since then, the foundation of Western realism has taken root in China. The realism and realism training system represented by Xu Beihong have deeply influenced the subsequent Chinese art such as sculpture and painting. While studying Western sculpture modeling techniques, sculptors studying in France have done systematic research and investigation on traditional Chinese sculptures, exploring a method of inheriting traditional sculptures and integrating Chinese and Western sculptures. For example, in his later article Talking about the Organizational Structure of Sculpture, talked about the Six Laws inspiring his sculpture creation, and proposed to transform Western art into our own things [5]. However, after the liberation, affected by the Soviet sculpture realism standards, Chinese sculpture at that time overemphasized that artistic creation should serve politics and be close to life, and the exploration of the nationalization of modern Chinese sculpture inherited from traditional Chinese sculpture was blocked off. And then, a series of political disturbances such as the Four Cleansing and Cultural Revolution brought the nationalization of Chinese sculpture into a cold winter period and stopped.

In the 1980s, after the reform and opening up, various Western artistic trends flooded into China. Chinese sculptors were busy preaching new trends, creating new works, and explaining various isms. The rise of Chinese contemporary art has brought the fusion of Chinese and Western sculptures, and the inheritance of traditional sculptures by modern and contemporary sculptures has once again been impacted. Under this impact, the research on traditional Chinese sculpture that has been restored once again fell into a predicament and was once in a state of stagnation. However, during this period, there were still some sculptors who insisted on studying and inheriting traditional Chinese sculpture techniques in line carving, relief carving and round carving, and

created some fine sculptures. For example, Qian Shaowu's Li Dazhao Memorial Statue is one of the representative works. The entire sculpture is 3.1 meters high from the top of the head to the collar, 7.5 meters wide at the shoulders, nearly 3 meters thick, and more than 100 tons of quarrying. The creation took more than two years and nearly three years. Li Dazhao's broad body and square face give people a sense of calmness and determination, which makes people reminiscent of the characteristics of the Central Plains culture, thinking of the archways, stone steps, and southern Tianmen of Mount Tai, and the heavy, clumsy, and big calligraphy of Han and Wei. Thinking of Tiananmen Square, the final image is condensed on a great, unshakable, open and solid foundation [6]. Qian Shaowu used the technique of relief to sculpt the facial features and glasses of Li Dazhao's commemorative portrait so that it fits tightly on the body.

Since the 21st century, Chinese sculptors have once again turned their attention to traditional sculpture. This is reflected in the sculpture education of Chinese institutions of higher learning. Before 2009, among the sculpture departments of China's major art academies, except for the ancient Chinese sculpture course of the Sculpture Department of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, which accounted for 25% of the total curriculum, the other art academies were all around 5%. After 2009, the sculpture departments of the fine arts academies began to pay attention to Chinese sculpture traditions in their teaching. In 2009, the proportion of ancient Chinese sculpture courses in the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts increased to more than 80%. In 2014, the proportion of ancient Chinese sculpture courses offered by China Academy of Art, Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts rose to about 15% [7]. Under this educational concept and system, young sculptors have been influenced by ancient sculpture styles and techniques and created a number of sculptures with Chinese and national characteristics. For example, Wu Tong's series of characters in the Peking Opera facial makeup "Guo Yun-Sheng, Dan, Jing, Chou". This work won a grand prize at the first China Sculpture Exhibition in 2008, and was permanently displayed and collected by the Beijing National Grand Theater. Wu Tong graduated from the Sculpture Department of Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts with a master's degree in 2008. He currently works at Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts and is a representative of the younger generation of Lu Xun sculptors. In this work, he uses the traditional iron line drawing to outline the contour language of the Beijing opera facial makeup and combines it with the three-dimensional surface of the Western-style three-dimensional sculpture, giving a sense of national charm to the mud.

#### **4. Analysis of the Nationalization and Cross-Cultural Communication of Contemporary Sculpture**

The inheritance of Chinese contemporary sculpture to traditional sculpture and the nationalization of contemporary sculpture are not only reflected in the sculpture technique and creation, but also reflected in the exploration of the upper sculpture theory. Some contemporary sculptors and sculpture theorists believe that the nationalization of contemporary Chinese sculpture is not simply an imitation of ancient sculptures, nor a simple inheritance of traditional sculpture techniques. Wang Shaojun pointed out that copying some ancient masterpieces and mastering some traditional sculpture language is not the ultimate goal. Contemporary Chinese sculpture should embody traditional culture in a deeper and broader dimension [8]. Yin Shuangxi also mentioned in the discussion of traditional culture and contemporary sculpture creation, Chinese sculpture, which is based on the academic sculpture introduced from the western in the 20th century, has only just begun to transform traditional cultural resources. Chinese traditional culture and art Artistic conception is becoming an important creative resource for young and middle-aged sculptors [9].

Limited by the traditional historical view of the Plastic Painting Garden and the low status of ancient sculptors, the development of Chinese sculpture theory has been lagging behind Chinese painting. Moreover, the introduction of western modern aesthetic ideology has impacted Chinese traditional artistic concepts. In 2008, the Chinese Sculpture Society held the First China Sculpture Academic Forum, which promoted the construction of Chinese sculpture theory. The meeting discussed the development direction of Chinese sculpture, discussed Chinese traditional sculpture and contemporary sculpture creation, and agreed that the study of form with Chinese meaning can

be the first step for Chinese sculpture to inherit the tradition.

In 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed the joint construction of the “The Belt and Road Initiatives” in two speeches on Promoting People's Friendship for a Better Future and Joining Hands to Build a China-ASEAN Community of Shared Future. On October 18, 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Strengthen the cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, with me as the mainstay and eclectic. Promote the development of international communication capabilities, tell Chinese stories well, and present a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, enhance the soft power of national culture. The core of enhancing the soft power of national culture lies in the discovery of outstanding culture with Chinese characteristics and the traditions of the Chinese nation. Therefore, the nationalization of Chinese contemporary sculpture is not just a simple issue of the direction of artistic creation, but an issue that can be elevated to a national cultural strategy, which is of great significance to the discovery and promotion of Chinese culture. Chinese sculpture originated from ancient sculpture, and was deeply influenced by Western sculpture. The development of Chinese sculpture requires cultural consciousness. First of all, we must affirm ourselves, base ourselves on the local culture, and highlight the oriental and Chinese characteristics. Only by inheriting the sculpture tradition and creating contemporary sculptures with Chinese national characteristics can they occupy a place in the world of sculpture art, and represent Chinese culture in the countries and regions along the “The Belt and Road Initiatives” and even the world, and promote Chinese culture.

## 5. Acknowledgment

1) Chinese Arts and Crafts Society Arts and Crafts Research Project Research Project: New Strategic Research on the Development of Arts and Crafts Industry and Brand Development in the Context of “The Belt and Road Initiatives” [Project No. CNACS2021-II-002];

2) Guangdong Province Science and Technology Innovation Strategy Special Fund Project: Research on the Inheritance and Development of Guangdong Traditional Art Intangible Cultural Heritage under the Background of “The Belt and Road Initiatives” [Project Number: 2018A070712044];

3) University of Manchester Visiting Program: “The Belt and Road Initiatives” cultural practice and art management research;

4) Basic and theoretical scientific research projects of Jiangmen Science and Technology Bureau.

5) Wenxing Yu, senior engineer and doctorate of Jiangmen Polytechnic. Research direction: intangible cultural heritage and regional development, arts and crafts and art management.

## References

- [1] B. H. Zong, Art State [M], Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, p. 256.
- [2] B. H. Zong, Art Environment [M], Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, p. 313.
- [3] Y. C. Xing, Magic Work: Research on Ancient Chinese Sculptures, Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Education Publishing House, 1996, p. 157.
- [4] Q. B. Zeng, On the Integration of Plastic and Painting in Traditional Chinese Sculpture [D], 2016 PhD Thesis of China Academy of Art, p. 10.
- [5] T. Y. Hua, Talking about the Organizational Structure of Sculpture [J], Fine Arts, No. 8, 1959, pp. 15-17.
- [6] S. W. Qian, Creation Experience of Comrade Li Dazhao Memorial Image [J], Fine Arts, Issue 4, 1990, Page 42.
- [7] J. F. Guo, On the Influence of Ancient Chinese Sculpture on Chinese Modern and Contemporary Sculpture Education [D], Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, 2017 PhD Thesis, p.72.

[8] S. J. Wang, Sculpture and Traditional Chinese Culture [J], Sculpture, Issue 5, 2004, p. 10.

[9] S. X. Yin, Tradition as a Living Cultural Resource-About Cai Zhisong's Sculptures [J], Issue 3, 2003, pp. 32-35.