

An Interpretation of the Hierarchy of Non-Ornamental Art in the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt

Jun Tang¹, Chao Zhang^{1*}

¹ Art College, Guizhou University, Guiyang, China

Email Address

464922741@qq.com (Chao Zhang)

*Correspondence: 464922741@qq.com

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Abstract:

Egyptian art provides extremely rich reference for the development of art all over the world. Through retrieval, comparison and other methods, this paper analyzes and expounds its design characteristics and design concept, and then deeply interprets the hierarchical order of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of Egypt.

Keywords:

Egypt, The Ancient Kingdom, Non Appreciative Art, Hierarchical Order

1. Introduction

As one of the four ancient civilizations, Egypt, according to its stable period, can be divided into three periods: ancient kingdom, Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom. Among them, the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom is a peak in the process of non appreciative art in ancient Egypt. People now sum up Egyptian art into historical art, but in the context of the emergence of ancient Egyptian art at that time, the ancient Egyptians did not have the concept of art, and the concept of creation was closer to functional art [1]. Although current researchers know that ancient Egyptian art creators have no artistic concept, they uniformly use the word “art” to summarize those creators’ architectures, sculptures and reliefs, which ignores the key point of the creative background and motivation. Combined with the current artistic view, researchers put forward the concept of non appreciative art. At the same time, in the exploration and research of art, there are fewer people who analyze and interpret the social hierarchical order embodied in the art of the ancient kingdom, and more people explore and interpret the order based on the ancient Egyptian documents, as well as make the ideal interpretation of the background and presentation of this kind of art. In the analysis, from the point of sculpture or mural of ancient Egypt, there is a lack of exploration on the historical background and causes of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of Egypt. Most explorations and studies on architecture, sculpture, and painting, etc., in the ancient kingdom are also based on their mysterious and beautiful artistic external aesthetics. Based on the above-mentioned research status, taking the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of Egypt as an example, and

regarding the unique concept of life, death, and religion in ancient Egypt as the starting point, this paper aims at combining with architectures sculptures and murals at that time to explore and analyze the hierarchical order of non appreciative Art in the ancient kingdom, so as to enrich the analysis and research of Egyptian art.

2. Non Appreciative Art in the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt

2.1. Non Appreciative Art

The concept and meaning of art can trace back to western aesthetics. Combined with the cultural context of different countries, it forms its own “art concept”. “Art” first came from Japanese scholars in the Western Zhou Dynasty who used “Yayi” as the title of “art”. Then the government summarized “art” with words “fine art”. In 1882, scholars had explained words “fine art” in detail in their works. And in 1878, the scholar Veron regarded “fine art” and “art” as synonyms used in his art work Vickers aesthetics [2]. In modern times, through Sino Japanese literary and artistic exchanges, the word "art" was spread to China. With the exploration and research of Chinese scholars on art, a large number of works related to art were published, which laid the foundation for the concept of art. After the founding of new China, this concept was basically established.

Art, a work from focusing on the objective world to turning to the inner world, comes from the objective reality and is higher than the objective reality. Therefore, from the current concept, all ancient Egyptian buildings, sculptures and murals based on objective reality and higher than objective reality can be included in the category of art, which have different aesthetic feelings, can express inner thoughts, and promote people to think, discuss and study. For the ancient Egyptians, all these just aimed at serving for the divine power and kingship, and were the “intermediary” on the way to immortality. Therefore, in light of the current artistic concept and the creative concept of ancient Egypt, it can be called non appreciative art.

2.2. The Historical Background of the Formation of Non Appreciative Art in the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt

As for the ancient kingdom of the pyramid era, it is the key point of Egypt's development. This period began from the Third Dynasty to the end of the sixth dynasty, spanning four dynasties. In the ancient kingdom, the king's capital was located in Memphis. On both sides of the Nile River, there were deserts with wide horizons and rare mountains. The Nile River runs through the whole country, which not only offers a good route to Egyptian trade activities, but also provides fertile land and sufficient water for the development of agricultural economy. With the rapid development of agriculture in ancient Egypt, the food produced is capable of not only meeting the daily needs of the people, but also supplying surplus food for trade activities. In addition, slavery and tax system also brought a lot of wealth to the country.

The autocratic monarchy with the king at its centre was politically established in the ancient kingdom , and the social structure was pyramid in shape, and the king ruled the whole “pyramid” class. In the ancient kingdom, people believed that the king was the representative and embodiment of gods in the world. Based on this, the king ruled autocratically and had an absolute right to speak. The divine power was combined with the royal power. In the ancient kingdom, there was no code, and all actions followed the principle of Maat, the daughter of the sun god RA. She was the

embodiment of fairness and justice [3], and the “cloak of divine power” for the king’s rule. On this basis, all non appreciative art presented the king's will and ideal. Art served the kingship, so as to achieve the purpose of eternal rule with material and spiritual strength.

At the same time, the development of language and hieroglyphics laid an important foundation for the development of literature and art in this period. The most distinctive literary embodiment is religious literature. In addition, relief murals have also developed. Compared with buildings and statues, relief murals are more used as an auxiliary expression of the role of pyramids.

2.3. Cause

The geographical environment of ancient Egypt played a decisive role in the formation of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of ancient Egypt. The Nile gave birth to Egypt and provided the ancient Egyptians with all the needs for reproduction. It is the basis of food, transportation, communication and state management. Through the observation of the Nile and the sun, Egyptian mythology, religion and the concept of life and death that affect the development of non appreciative art in Egypt appeared. The ancient Egyptians believed that the soul was still alive in the wake of death, holding the concept of eternal life, and thought that human life could cycle like the Nile; the sun is the God who creates all things, and the sun that rises and sets every day is a new life, then the Egyptians who are illuminated by the sun and blessed by the god can also make people reborn after death; all things in the world are in constant circulation [4]. The world is eternal, and human nature is also included in it. It has derived the religious view and the view of life and death that the god can bring people back from the dead, and spread this concept in all fields of life, finally forming the unique artistic civilization of ancient Egypt. Therefore, the natural environment has a great impact on the formation of ancient Egyptian civilization.

In the ancient kingdom, people’s observation of the living environment and nature has made great progress compared with prehistoric times. Therefore, the worship of all things in nature has gradually weakened, with the change from it to the worship of animals. People combined the image of animals with their own image to shape the image of God, such as the God in the image of scarab which is regarded as the sun in the morning and one of the gods of La. The origin of Scarab image is referred to, based on the observation of scarab habits, combine the circular dung ball with the shape of the sun, and the Scarab cub is born from the dung ball as if reborn from decay. In view of the concept of its formation, this image was regarded as one of the visual images of the sun God. At the same time, with the continuous progress of civilization, the image of God is close to human itself. It not only has the image of human beings, but also people's living habits and temper. The emergence of personalized God is also an important factor for the king to sanctify himself and maintain his ruling authority.

With the development of history, countries have emerged. At that time, under the background that Egyptian people believed in the god, in order to consolidate the rule of kingship, the king claimed that he was the incarnation of God and has supreme power and status. Therefore, at that time, it showed that the king has multiple identities, not only the ruler of the country, but also the incarnation of God on earth, and the medium between God and man, forming a strict hierarchy respected the king.

Based on the current situation of more deserts and less mountains in Egypt, combined with the king's desire to reflect the uniqueness of his mausoleum at that time, he gradually changed the previous way of mausoleum and gradually evolved into a "pyramid". In light of the concept of immortality, the pyramid became higher and higher. The ancient Egyptians firmly believed that this could ensure that the king would not be disturbed by the secular world, which is conducive to the advent of the soul and thus resurrection. Mummies, statues and murals are the intermediary to ensure immortality and the carrier of faith.

As for the class essence of the ancient kingdom, the possession of means of production was dominated by kings, supplemented by princes, nobles, officials and slave owners, and civilians and slaves were the exploited party. The main laborers in this period were craftsmen, civilians and slaves. The objects of labor were all material goods, such as buildings, statues and murals. At the same time, divine power were utilized to hide the essence of exploitation. The productivity of the ancient kingdom was not developed, and the people's economy barely supplied enough food and clothing. Therefore, the common people did not have more time to think about things other than survival, and were basically not qualified to enjoy the right to education. The schools were exclusive to the princes and nobles. Therefore, the common people were relatively backward in thought, and was easier to believe that the "divine power" coat worn by the king was an important reason for the formation of the hierarchy.

In the Egyptian's perception, society was hierarchical. The king was the representative of the highest power and the messenger of God's will. He was capable of helping the weak and solving all kinds of problems. Under the king's Divine rule, the common people would be blessed by the god and the society would be in long-term stability. The king's rule was the only guarantee to maintain social order. Therefore, the Egyptians were willing to serve the king at that time, and the king was synonymous with stability. Based on this, ancient Egypt formed a pyramid hierarchy with the king as the respect. The king has the absolute right to speak and played a decisive role in the development of Egyptian art. Basically, Egypt's non appreciative art served the state power. The content and form of art should comply with the king's wishes to consolidate the social hierarchical order under the king's rule, which also fundamentally determined the cultural connotation and form of Egyptian art.

3. Modern Interpretation of the Cultural Connotation of Non Appreciative Art in the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt

So far, there are still many places deserving to explore and study the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom. Generally speaking, the non appreciative Arts in the ancient kingdom are divided into the following parts: architecture, statue, relief and mural, with architecture and statue as the main representatives. Therefore, based on the analysis and interpretation of the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom, it also can be separated into internal and external layers. From the outer layer, the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom is developed for immortality and serves the dead, whereas from the inner layer, it is employed to maintain rule and is the product of hierarchical order.

3.1. Outer Layer: Eternal Life

In the ancient kingdom, the worship of the sun god and the religious concept became the leading factors in the development of art [5]. In the Egyptian concept, the

sun also has the alternation of life and death, and corresponded to the early, middle and late stages of the sun's employment in the youth, young adults and old age. The rising of the sun in the East and the falling in the West are regarded as the process from birth to death. Every day the sun is a brand-new beginning, and all things in the world are in a continuous cycle, including people. Based on this, Egyptians formed the unique concept of life and death in ancient Egypt - life is eternal, and life in this world is only a moment in eternity.

Based on this concept, the form, content and structure of buildings, statues and murals all are formed for the eternal life. For example, the higher the king approaches the pyramid, the closer he will be to the tomb. Taking Khufu pyramid as an example, it is divided into upper, middle and lower layers. The upper layer is Khufu's funeral room, the middle is the queen funeral room, and the lower layer is passages and tunnels. The internal structure of the pyramid shows Khufu's strong desire to ascend to heaven after death, which presents that the ancient Egyptians pursue the eternal view of life and death. The pyramid also plays a role in protecting the king's body and giving the soul a quiet place. Eternal life is based on the sound preservation of the body, which is the place where the soul lives. If the body is destroyed or even decayed, it will really die [6]. Therefore, in the tomb, the mummy made of the body is placed in the sarcophagus to prevent the body from decaying. At the same time, the sarcophagus is engraved with a large number of inscriptions and the eye of ushat, hoping to promote the resurrection of the dead. In order to ensure the resurrection without any risk, the statue of the dead should be placed in the pyramid, and be the same as the face and body of the dead. Especially the head of its statue should be absolutely consistent with the dead's head, so as to facilitate the return of the soul of the dead. The stone of the statue is also engraved with inscriptions, which makes it unique and significant.

The number of reliefs and murals in this period also accounts for a large proportion, mostly depicting common scenes such as religious ceremonies, daily banquets and daily life, and even depicting the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians believe that the afterlife can continue the status and wealth of the present world and have a dialogue with various gods. This is what the ancient Egyptians can do to ensure their resurrection. Tombs, statues and murals are the symbols of their cultural spirits and also constitute the surface form of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom.

3.2. Inner Layer: Hierarchical Order

Ancient Egypt is a typical monarchy, which came into being about 3200 BC. Everything produced under the monarchy has the color of hierarchical order. From the perspective of the non appreciative art of the ancient kingdom, it is an art that serves the dead and the concept of immortality. However, fundamentally, it is the product of the monarchy and serves the princes and nobles headed by the king. All non appreciative arts reflect the strict concept of hierarchical order. The ancient Egyptians believed that God creates all things in the world and establishes an order. Princes and nobles should abide by the order of kings and officials, while civilian slaves should be more aware of respect and inferiority, abide by the order and cannot overstep [7]. The king was the defender of God's order. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians adhered to the social hierarchical order and lived in the "order created by God" year after year. They believed that only in this way could the world continue to exist and only by observing the order could they survive. Under the influence of this concept, the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom showed a strict hierarchical order.

The famous pyramid in the ancient kingdom is a key point to highlight the hierarchical order. The shape of the pyramid is very similar to the social hierarchy order of ancient Egypt. It can be said that the Egyptian pyramid is a symbol of social hierarchy and order in the ancient kingdom. In the ancient kingdom, only the king was qualified to build such a tall tomb, so that he could reflect his identity and status. At the same time, he publicized his identity related to God, which made people feel awe ideologically and prevented others from imitating pyramids as tombs, so that people would always remember their unique identity and all subjects should submit to the king. Even craftsmen and civilians were proud of being able to build a tomb for the king, and believed that helping the incarnation of God - the king to build the tomb would protect themselves after the King returned to the throne, resulting in deep-rooted hierarchy in thought. Princes and nobles also built their own tombs around the pyramid, but their tombs should not be larger than the king's tomb, so as to seek the protection of the king, which also embodied the order among the king and officials [8].

The pyramid is the greatest manifestation of the hierarchical order in the ancient kingdom. The statues placed in the pyramid further supplement the manifestation of the hierarchical order. In the ancient kingdom, the statue has a mysterious intermediary role and owned the extensive and rich deep-seated significance. It was the substitute of the master's body, the sustenance of the soul and the guarantee to ensure the return of the soul. However, not everyone can own the statue except the king with divinity. In addition, princes and nobles who obtained the consent of the king could also enjoy this honor. However, the size can not exceed the size of the king's statue. After carving the statute, relevant words of praising and blessing the king should be engraved to show respect and deeply express the strict observance of the hierarchical order in people's hearts at that time. It was more important to integrate the hierarchical order into the blood. There were also statues of entourage attendants in the tomb. Compared with statutes of the king and nobles, the statues of attendants were the smallest, which also showed its lowest status. The role of the statues of attendants was to replace the dead and continued to serve the dead according to their human identity in the eternal world, which showed that the class order of the eternal world in the ideal of the ancient kingdom still exists, which can not be separated from the human hierarchical order and multi-level imprison people's thoughts, so as to maintain the permanent social hierarchical order.

Tracing back to the art prior to the ancient kingdom of Egypt, through the comparison of statues and buildings, it is interesting to find that the buildings and statues in the ancient kingdom period obviously present different styles and features from those in the early period. The buildings and statues in the ancient kingdom period are more rigorous and obviously follow a unified rule. For example, the painted clay in the statue of woman 4000 years ago is the shaping of the beautiful body of woman with free posture. It is completely different from the style and form of sculptures in the ancient kingdom. Sculptures in the ancient kingdom obviously abide by the proportion of characters, basically have no expression of the dynamic characteristics of characters, and their postures are extremely rigorous. While the statue of woman is entirely the shaping of the dynamic characteristics of characters, without much description about facial features and postures of characters. It can be seen that there is no obvious social hierarchy at first, so sculptures do not need to be rigorous and rigid. By the time of the ancient kingdom, the social hierarchy had been fully formed, and the statue was an important carrier to show the majesty of the king. At the same time, compared with the relief painting in the ancient kingdom and the

early stage, the size, proportion and position of the characters in the picture are also significantly different. The composition of the early relief painting is chaotic, the information conveyed is messy, and the priority of the characters in the picture is not clear. In the ancient kingdom, the picture composition is rigorous and the information is conveyed clearly. The size of the characters in the picture is expressed according to their status. The depiction content is subjectively processed to enlarge the body of the main characters, and the rest of the animals and plants, attendants and family members are reduced, so as to express the solemn feeling and dignity of the characters. The higher the status is, the larger the proportion of the image is in the picture and the more rigid the image depiction is [9]. All reflect the social hierarchical order of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom.

4. Conclusions

Dana once proposed in philosophy of art that there are three main factors for the emergence of Art: race, environment and era. He expounded that the nature and appearance of art depend on the above three factors, whether it is material civilization or spiritual civilization. Art is a comprehensive presentation of material civilization and spiritual civilization in the process of human civilization, which can reflect the background, economy, politics and culture of the era to a certain extent.

The formation of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom is inseparable from the background of the times, and the influence of politics, economy and culture. On the one hand, with the continuous development of the historical process, the ancient Egyptians' observation and reflection on the geographical environment derived the Polytheism religious view and the eternal view of life and death, which is the inevitable product of the times at that time. As for the autocratic monarchy system in the ancient kingdom, the king utilizes it to sanctify his rule and position and make it authoritative in order to consolidate the kingship. Also, the king borrows the "divine power" as the ruling coat, so as to make his rule irresistible, and also cover up the essence of the exploitation of the ruler, which can stabilize the ruling position in a great extent and time, avoiding to be overthrown. On the other hand, the non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom represents not only the rulers' ideal at that time, but also the consolidation of the national social hierarchical order, which has a profound impact on the development of the artistic concept. Therefore, the art of each period is a reflection of the social culture of its time. The formal law, language and creative concept of non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of Egypt reflect the social culture at that time. Both architectures and statues embody the social culture at that time. The unity of cultural material and spirit is the combination of the culture at that time.

The non appreciative art in the ancient kingdom of Egypt is unique in the development of world art, with distinctive national features and characteristics of the times. The ancient kingdom period is only a section of the whole brilliant process of Egypt. There are more non appreciative arts and the art value deserving us to explore and research

Conflicts of Interest

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