

Study on the functional design of lion-shaped lamps from sacred to secular from the perspective of "Locality"

*Siwei Su, Jie Wei**

Jiangnan University, Wuxi, China

*Corresponding Author. Email: 14179324726@qq.com

Abstract. This study, based on the theory of Locality, systematically examines the functional transformation of ancient Chinese lion-shaped lamps from the burial context to daily living scenes. By sorting out the evolution of their shapes, decorations and application scenarios, it reveals how these lamps transformed from funerary "ever-burning lamps" into daily lighting utensils and accomplished the creative transformation from foreign cultural symbols to a model of local artifact creation. Combining textual research and physical analysis, this study proposes that the localization process of lion-shaped lamps is a dynamic adaptation in a specific temporal and spatial context through the integration of the local environment, symbolic expression and functional expansion, which realizes the innovation of functions and the re-endowment of symbolic meanings, reflecting the wisdom of the Chinese culture in digesting foreign cultures and its ability of reconstruction. This paper provides a new perspective for the design of traditional artifacts, and also offers a historical reference for the contemporary cross-cultural design practice in the era of globalization.

Keywords: lion-shaped lamps, local design, functional transformation, cultural translation

1. Introduction

The Silk Road brought not only goods but also vivid cultures to China. The lion, a beast originally not native to the Central Plains, entered China along this road after the Han and Tang dynasties, gradually permeating into the beliefs, aesthetics and artifact creation of the Huaxia nation and evolving into a variety of lion-shaped utensils. Lion-shaped lamps integrate the functions of lighting, etiquette and symbolism. How did they evolve from the dim ever-burning lamps in tombs to the lighting tools used in the halls and on the desks of secular life? It is precisely an epitome of how foreign symbols were tamed and immersed in local life, and ultimately carried human emotions. In fact, the academic circle has conducted quite a few discussions on lion culture, with accumulated research in the fields of sculpture, decorative patterns and symbolism, but most of them fall into the category of art history or archaeology. However, there seem to be few thematic studies sorting out lion-shaped lamps from the perspective of design science, and even fewer studies place them within the framework of "Locality". What this paper intends to do is to revisit the story of lion-shaped lamps with "Locality" as the clue. By tracing their origin and evolution combined with literature and physical samples, this paper observes the evolution of their shapes and functions, and attempts to understand how this foreign artifact gradually developed a unique look in the Chinese context. Ultimately, while filling the gap in the

research on artifact design, it is hoped to extract the still shining wisdom from this millennium-long adaptation and innovation, and provide a logical framework for cross-cultural artifact creation in today's globalized world, which may bring different inspirations to contemporary design.

2. The theory of Locality and the historical origin of the local development of lion-shaped lamps

2.1. Elaboration of the Locality theory

The theory of Locality focuses on the deep connection between regions and human beings, and is a key theoretical framework to address the cultural homogenization in the process of globalization. The geographer John K. Wright pointed out that a place is not only an objective spatial unit, but also a carrier of emotions and meanings [1]. Duan Yifu further elaborated the emotional bond between humans and places, revealing the interdependent and generative relationship between humans and their living environments [2]. The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai put forward from a dynamic perspective that a place is a meaning network continuously reconstructed through cultural practices, rather than a static container [3]. Different from "regionality" or "localization", Locality emphasizes the interaction between the design subject and a specific field, and pays attention to the response to the local historical context, natural environment, craft system and lifestyle. It is both a research perspective for analyzing the generation mechanism of local culture and a practical method that can mobilize local resources and activate cultural memories, with the core lying in the interactive relationship of "being born and changing with the land".

This theory mainly includes three core characteristics: first, site-specificity, which requires design to be rooted in real scenes and establish direct understanding through on-site perception; second, cultural locality, which emphasizes the integration process of foreign elements and local traditions, manifested as the creative transformation of cultural symbols, forms and meanings; third, subjective perception, that is, focusing on the sensory experience, emotional connection and cultural understanding of local people, so that the designed artifacts resonate with human emotions [4]. In the fields of public art, cultural and creative products and others, the practice of Locality emphasizes that cultural symbols should be rooted in the overall context of a place and thus construct a unique visual system and cultural expression, which can easily arouse local emotional resonance and help the dissemination of local culture.

2.2. Historical overview of lion culture

As a foreign cultural image, the spread of the lion is closely linked to the development of the Silk Road. *Book of the Later Han · Biography of the Western Regions* records: "In the first year of Zhanghe during the reign of Emperor Zhang (87 AD), the Kingdom of Anxi sent envoys to present a lion and a unicorn-like beast named Fuba". After Zhang Qian opened up the Western Regions, the lion entered the Central Plains as a "rare exotic creature" and was initially regarded by the royal family as a precious beast symbolizing majesty. In the early stage of its introduction, it inherited the martial tradition and divine symbolism in the cultures of West Asia and Central Asia [5], and its powerful image met the demand for power symbols in ancient China, thus being quickly incorporated into the ritual expression system and becoming a symbol of the nobility. With the eastward spread of Buddhism, the connection between the lion and Chinese culture was further strengthened. *Records of the Lamp* notes that Sakyamuni uttered a "lion's roar" at his birth, proclaiming "I am the only one honored in heaven and on earth", and the lion was thus regarded as a sacred beast of solemnity and auspiciousness [6]. In Buddhist narratives, the lion often appears as the mount of Bodhisattvas, which enriches

its religious connotation as a Dharma-protecting sacred beast. From the Wei, Jin to the Tang dynasties, the image of the lion gradually transformed from a pure symbol of power into a multicultural symbol, which not only continued the religious function of guarding against evil spirits, but also began to integrate into local aesthetics and daily life. The emergence of works such as *Ode to the Lion* by Yu Shinan in the Tang Dynasty marked that its image had entered the vision of popular culture [7]. The localization process of lion culture accelerated after the Song and Yuan dynasties, and the image gradually lost its exotic features, evolving into an auspicious shape that is mighty yet tame, solemn yet approachable. Thus, the lion extended from a sacred artifact to a daily decoration, deriving auspicious patterns such as "the lion playing with a ball" and "the big lion and the small lion" [8], and ultimately completed the cultural transformation from a sacred beast of the Western Regions to an auspicious beast of China, which also laid a cultural foundation for the functional evolution of lion-shaped lamps.

2.3. Origin and evolution of lion-shaped lamps

People initially applied the lion image to burial lamps because, as an imported object, the lion was considered more powerful than the native tiger in the eyes of people at that time, and its rarity added a layer of mystery to it. In the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, under the dual influence of the Buddhist Dharma-protecting sacred beast and the belief in tomb guarding, the lion-shaped ever-burning lamp became a unique funerary object in tombs. Its closed abdominal cavity and large oil storage capacity exactly matched the prevailing obsession with "everlasting light" and the trend of religious worship at that time, and lion-shaped lamps thus rose initially. In the Sui and Tang dynasties, social openness and technological progress allowed it to walk out of the tomb chambers and enter the palaces and temples. The shapes at this time balanced realism and decoration, not only inheriting the image of the lion throne in Buddhism, but also beginning to adapt to the actual lighting needs, and even gorgeous gold and silver artifacts emerged. In the Song Dynasty, with the rise of citizen culture, lion-shaped lamps became increasingly close to daily life. Auspicious styles such as the mother lion with cubs and the lion playing with a ball became popular, and the advancement of porcelain-making technology enriched the narrative of shapes, no longer limited to a single function. The Ming and Qing dynasties can be regarded as the culmination stage, in which lion-shaped lamps were completely integrated into the folk auspicious symbol system. Whether it is the bronze or stone lion gate lamps or the earthen and porcelain desk lamps, the shapes are often mighty yet approachable, and the decorative patterns also imply homophonic auspicious meanings such as "peace in all matters" [6]. At this time, while continuing the symbolic meaning of house guarding and attracting good fortune, it also deepened its practical value, becoming a witness to the integration of spiritual belief and the aesthetics of daily life, silently telling the vivid process of how local culture absorbed and transformed foreign elements (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Development stages of lion-shaped lamps

3. From paradigm fixation to local innovation: the local evolution of the shape of lion-shaped lamps

From the perspective of Locality, the evolutionary trajectory of the shape of lion-shaped lamps presents a shift from foreign paradigms to localized languages. Its form developed from the fixed paradigm of divine majesty in the early stage to a diversified form integrating regional aesthetics and practical needs, reflecting the dual veins of cultural integration and local innovation.

3.1. Proportion and scale – from stylized norms to diverse adaptation

Since the emergence of lion-shaped lamps in the Eastern Han Dynasty, their early shapes bore obvious marks of Western lion culture. Especially when used as "ever-burning lamps" in tombs, their forms were often constrained by a set of fixed sacred rituals. A typical representative of this period is the celadon lion-shaped candlestick, which has a large head, a round torso and an overall solemn and majestic posture. It is more of a ritual artifact symbolizing deterrence in the tomb than a lighting tool. Its small size facilitated paired placement in the limited burial space, and its ferocious expression and exaggerated details were sufficient to convey divine power without relying on a huge volume. It can be said that the design of lion-shaped lamps at this time revolved almost entirely around the ritual needs of the tomb, without incorporating the actual considerations of daily life.

With the passage of time, real lions were gradually seen in the Central Plains through tributes and other means, and the divine veil on them slowly faded. Correspondingly, lion-shaped lamps began to walk out of the dark tomb chambers and enter the daily living spaces of the living. This scene transformation first affected its proportion and posture.

After the Wei and Jin dynasties, the living habit gradually changed from sitting on the ground to using high furniture, and the practical height of lamps also had to keep up with the changes in life. Thus, we can see that the originally low and crouching lion-shaped candle holders gradually stood up and became tall and straight lion-shaped oil lamps. Craftsmen intentionally raised its abdominal cavity and base, and its limbs became more stretched, only to make the height of the light more suitable for people's line of sight when sitting on couches or standing upright. This seemingly subtle adjustment marked its transformation from a symbol in rituals to a daily utensil interacting with humans.

The expansion of application scenarios also gave birth to the diversification of shapes. The lion was no longer always solemn and glaring, but appeared in vivid images such as frolicking, tame, and even accompanied by Hu people and lion cubs. Warmth began to blend into majesty, and the sacred beast gradually took on the breath of mortal life. As scholars have pointed out, "Locality" is related to both specific places and eras, and is also rooted in the cultural geographical space, which together shape the form and meaning of artifacts [9]. Following this local logic, ancient craftsmen carried out bold and ingenious remodeling of lion-shaped lamps according to the real scenarios of daily use. Interestingly, after calculating the average height of the existing 117 lion-shaped lamp samples, the author found that the average height before the Wei and Jin dynasties was 11.5 cm, while the average height after the Wei and Jin dynasties increased to 18.32 cm. That is, when most lamps tended to be low and delicate with the increase in the height of furniture, lion-shaped lamps grew in the opposite direction, transforming from low and crouching to tall and upright (Figure 2), which exactly reflects its functional transformation from a tomb-guarding funerary object to a daily lighting tool, and ultimately found its own position and light on people's desks and in halls.

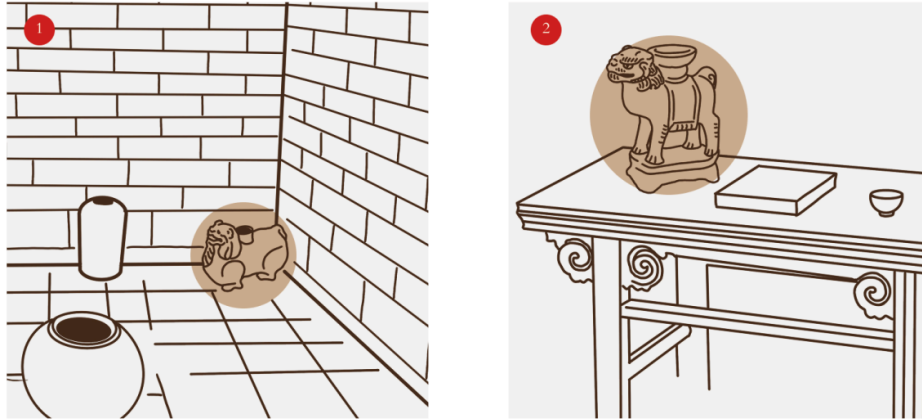


Figure 2. Adaptive changes in the proportion and scale of lion-shaped lamps. (1) Low posture before the Wei and Jin dynasties; (2) Tall and upright posture after the Wei and Jin dynasties

3.2. Expression and features – from divine majesty to human affability

The image of the lion in the Western tradition has always been closely bound to power, royal power and divinity. From the human-headed winged lion of Assyria to the beast conquered by Heracles in Greek mythology, all are realistic representations of biological power and sacred authority (Figure 3-1), with muscles and movements pursuing anatomical accuracy, serving a narrative that highlights military force and the divine right of kings.

In China, the lion was initially an "exotic sacred beast" in the Wei and Jin dynasties, and its image was shrouded in mystery and majesty. As a lamp in tombs, it was often sculpted with its head held high, eyes staring, teeth bared and fangs showing, and even decorated with wing patterns from the Western Regions around its body. At that time, craftsmen had never seen a real lion, and could only mix the imagery of horse manes with their imagination, and then integrate the ritual of the Buddhist "lion throne", ultimately presenting a solemn and distant expression (Figure 3-2).

In the Sui and Tang dynasties, with the frequent exchanges along the Silk Road, more real lions were seen by people at that time, and the image in lion-shaped lamps also began to "step down from the divine altar". Although the tri-color glazed pottery lion-shaped candlestick of the Tang Dynasty (Figure 3-3) is still robust in physique, its expression has become calm, with natural curly manes and full muscle lines, which clearly shows more observations of the real lion's appearance. Divinity faded away, and it gradually became an auspicious beast that could be accepted and even "tamed". This forms a subtle contrast with the solemn image of the lion in Western art of the same period and later generations, which has always been a symbol of heroes and royal power (such as the sculptures in the Palace of Versailles).

The real turning point probably came after the Song and Yuan dynasties, especially in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The lion image was completely integrated into the fabric of folk life, and its expression became increasingly tame and approachable, even appearing in the shape of a "lion dog" similar to cats and dogs (Figure 3-4). Craftsmen no longer insisted on realism, but turned to freehand brushwork. It grinned and stuck out its tongue, with smiling eyebrows and eyes, and its claws looked like fluffy balls. The lion was endowed with a brand-new cultural role: it is both an auspicious sustenance of "all wishes come true as the lion implies" and a guardian companion for house protection and family peace. Combined with the ball and lion cubs, it is full of mortal wishes for a better life.

Looking at the overall context, the evolution of the lion's appearance in lion-shaped lamps is far more than a change in shape. It is like a "taming" journey from the divine altar to the mortal world, where the fierce beast was tamed into a domestic dog, and divinity was deconstructed into auspiciousness. Ultimately, driven by both function and emotion, it completed the identity transformation from a foreign symbol to a carrier of local emotions. Behind this may lie the down-to-earth and humane wisdom in the Chinese thought of artifact creation.

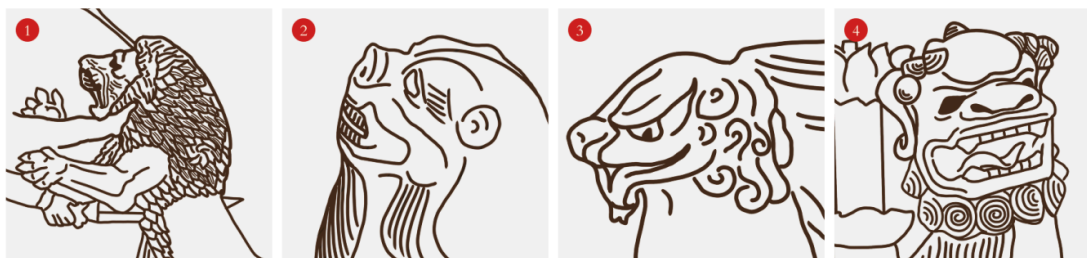


Figure 3. Comparison of the expressions and features of Chinese and Western lions (drawn by the author). (1) Relief of the Assyrian king hunting; (2) Partial view of a celadon lion-shaped artifact of the Western Jin Dynasty; (3) Partial view of a tri-color glazed pottery lion-shaped candlestick of the Tang Dynasty; (4) Partial view of a plain tricolor porcelain lion-shaped candlestick of the Kangxi period in the Qing Dynasty

3.3. Decorative language – from single symbols to composite narrative

In the Wei and Jin dynasties, the decoration of lion-shaped lamps still carried strong Western Region traces [5]. The lions on those celadon candlesticks have upright ears, flowing manes, drooping whiskers under the jaw, and a pair of flying wing patterns often carved on the waist, accompanied by grid and linked bead patterns, which are simply a symbolic continuation and reproduction of the Western winged lion (Figures 4-1, 4-2). For example, the celadon lion-shaped candlestick of the Three Kingdoms period collected in Ezhou Museum of Hubei Province has wing patterns on the abdominal side outlined with rigid straight lines and a robust posture, imitating and transplanting part of the image of Western winged sacred beasts. At that time, craftsmen also seemed to try to make the image more vivid: the manes were no longer just imitating the straightness of horse manes, and curly textures gradually appeared, using combing or stamping circles to show a fluffy feeling. The lamps at this time were mostly used for the "afterlife", and the purpose of decoration was not so much for beauty as to strengthen the magical color of the lion.

Subtle changes took place in the Sui and Tang dynasties. After the Southern and Northern Dynasties, with Buddhism deeply integrated into Chinese life, the image of the lion as the mount of Bodhisattvas and the spirit beast protecting the Dharma took root in people's hearts, and the decoration of lamps also added new languages accordingly. Lotus patterns appeared on the base or bearing plate, forming the typical image of "the lion carrying a lotus platform" (Figures 4-3, 4-4). Traditional Chinese scroll grass and interlocking branch patterns also gently twined around the body of the lamps. The lion was no longer just a monster guarding tombs; it began to be connected with Buddhist images such as light and wisdom. A single lamp thus carried the wish of praying for blessings and exorcising evil spirits, and also brought people more religious narrative experiences and insights.

After the Song and Yuan dynasties, the image of the lion had completely transformed, and the decorative language became more abundant (Figures 4-5, 4-6). Spiral patterns were densely decorated into spiral hair buns, making the lion's outline appear round and approachable; it wore tassel bells around its neck and stepped on a ball with its paws (Figures 4-7, 4-8), and was often accompanied by lion cubs frolicking beside it, almost

becoming a visual embodiment of auspicious phrases. At this time, it can be seen that decoration was no longer just to show the majesty of the lion, but more like telling the secular narrative of "prosperous offspring" and "good things come in pairs" through a set of symbols. From the divine wings to the mortal ball, the decoration of lion-shaped lamps has gone through a path from symbol transplantation to emotional expression, and ultimately found its warm and lively position in the living scenes of the Chinese people.

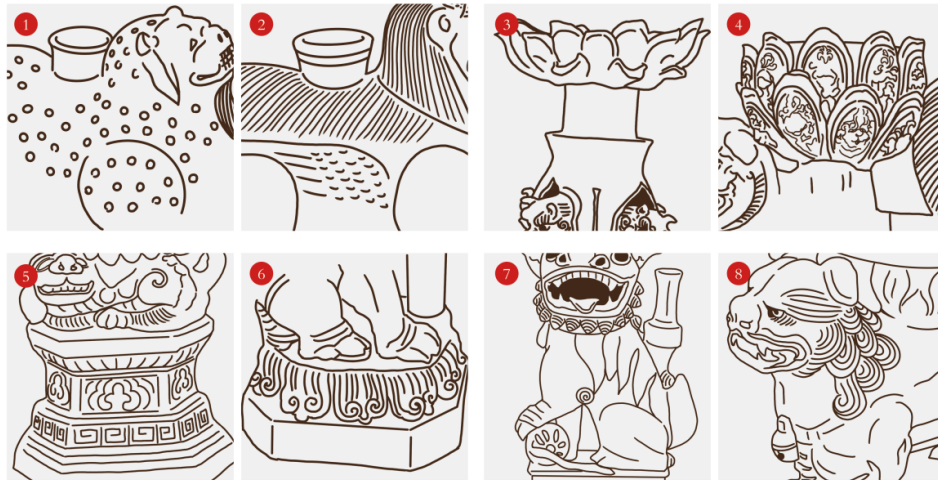


Figure 4. Evolution of common decorative languages of lion-shaped lamps in various stages (drawn by the author). (1) A celadon lion-shaped insertion artifact of the Eastern Jin Dynasty decorated with linked bead patterns all over the body; (2) Wing patterns on the base of a celadon lion-shaped artifact of the Yue Kiln in the Western Jin Dynasty; (3) A lion lamp with a lotus lamp holder of the Northern Dynasties; (4) A yellow and green glazed lion sitting on a lotus lamp of the Song Dynasty; (5) Ruyi patterns and swastika patterns on a celadon lion-shaped candlestick of the Longquan Kiln in the Ming Dynasty; (6) A tri-color lion holding a pillar with a lotus seat pattern of the Gongxian Kiln in the Tang Dynasty; (7) An imitated Kangxi plain tricolor sitting lion stepping on a ball of the Guangxu period in the Qing Dynasty; (8) A celadon lion lamp with a tassel bell around the neck of the Yaozhou Kiln in the Northern Song Dynasty

4. From sacred funerary objects to secular lamps: the local functional transformation of lion-shaped lamps

The theory of Locality emphasizes the dynamic balance between humans, places and culture, whose core lies in realizing the local transformation of cultural elements through the material practice of the "local site", the symbolic translation of cultural locality and the emotional connection of human subjective perception [4]. Based on this theoretical framework, this chapter discusses the internal mechanism of the transformation of lion-shaped lamps from religious funerary objects to daily utensils. This transformation process not only reflects the evolution of artifact functions, but also shows the complete path of foreign cultural symbols being creatively transformed in the specific social context of China, which is a vivid practice of the local design principle of "adapting to the time, the place and the people".

4.1. Material field – from burial space to living place

The "place" dimension in the theory of Locality emphasizes the restriction and shaping of material practice by the specific regional environment, which is manifested as "depending on the weather for food" around the natural environment, affecting the design form and material selection of lion-shaped lamps. The production of lion-shaped lamps fully reflects the utilization of local porcelain clay resources. With the development of kilns such as the Yue Kiln and the Longquan Kiln in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, celadon became the main material of lion-shaped lamps. In the Sui and Tang dynasties, with the maturity of metal processing technology and the trend of gold and silver worship, metal lion-shaped lamps gradually increased in number, whose bright luster was more suitable for use in ritual occasions and daily living places, and could better reflect the solemnity of ritual activities and the social status of users. Within the scope of the material region, material elements with distinct characteristics are determined, endowing lion-shaped lamps with field recognition. "Place" is not only the place of raw material production, but also the place of artifact use. The shape design of lion-shaped lamps has undergone adaptive changes with the movement of application scenarios. In the burial space, to meet the functional needs of tomb guarding and exorcising evil spirits, the lamps are required to have a stable and low shape with a majestic and fierce expression; when they enter the daily living field, the shape is transformed into an auspicious posture to adapt to secular aesthetics and practical needs. This morphological transformation is a dynamic adaptation of lion-shaped lamps in the transformation of specific material fields.

China's unique natural scenery and living scenes constitute a basic narrative structure. The creation practice of lion-shaped lamps is exactly born from this structure. Craftsmen first face the local soil and materials in front of them, and then respond to the specific context where the artifacts are located. Those abstract local characteristics are thus gradually kneaded into porcelain clay and cast into metal, and ultimately refined into the forms and expressions of individual lamps. This is a process of transforming geographical context into the language of artifact creation, and also the deep root for the continuous evolution and lasting vitality of lion-shaped lamps.

4.2. Concept and emotion – from mysterious narrative to emotional sustenance

The "cultural" dimension of the Locality theory emphasizes the dynamic development of local culture in social interaction. From the perspective of the essence of cultural generation, any cultural form is the product of the spiritual accumulation of a specific group in the historical process. The values, ethical norms, religious beliefs and philosophical thoughts formed in ancient Chinese society together constitute a unique regional cultural system, and these internal spiritual elements are embodied in material carriers. In artifact design, design practice always revolves around the cognitive mode and value orientation of a specific group, manifested as the selection of creation content and themes.

In the specific regional cultural context of China, the evolutionary trajectory of lion-shaped lamps vividly shows the complete process of cultural locality. Through emotional projection and memory reconstruction, the design subject "humans" has gradually incorporated the foreign lion culture into the local cognitive system. In the early stage of cultural acceptance, people pursued similar cultural memories and value identity, so they established a symbolic connection between the unfamiliar lion of the Western Regions and the traditional sacred beast "Suanni", transforming it into a familiar appearance and thus completing the first step of acceptance of foreign symbols. This cognitive transformation is essentially a cultural adaptation mechanism, reflecting the cognitive strategy of the subject in interpreting foreign elements through the existing cultural framework [10]. With the passage of time, the lion image has gradually completed the identity transformation from a foreign symbol to a symbol of local auspicious beasts. When this image is deeply integrated into the

values of the Chinese people, it has evolved into a "new" cultural symbol with distinct local characteristics. The morphological evolution of lion-shaped lamps reflects the emotional and cultural connection and identity value recognition established between humans and the specific regional environment (Figure 5). The auspicious implications, social class symbols and expectations for a better life contained in the shape of lion-shaped lamps not only reflect the unique cultural psychology of "worshipping auspiciousness" in China, but also deeply embody the inclusive underlying philosophical concepts and value orientations of Chinese culture reflected behind regional cultural symbols, making lion-shaped lamps surpass the simple practical function. Local transformation makes culture regenerate in integration, and endows artifacts with "implied meaning" beyond functions in use.



Figure 5. The process of the transformation of lion culture in terms of concept and emotion in lion-shaped lamps

4.3. Functional expansion – from tomb-guarding funerary objects to diverse composite functions

The design subject "humans" in the theory of Locality runs through the close interaction with "place" and "culture", and is the most important source of subjective perception and demand in design. The functional expansion process of lion-shaped lamps fully reflects the core role of humans in the culturally transformed local symbols and social interaction. "Humans" have strong practicality and are associated with people's behaviors, with perceptible intuitiveness of social interaction (Figure 6).

From a diachronic perspective, lion-shaped lamps have developed from a single function to composite functions. It was initially only an ever-burning lamp in tombs, solemn and mysterious; with the eastward spread of Buddhism, the lotus seat was integrated into the lamp body, and it became an offering lamp in front of the Buddha, bearing ritual functions; later, it quietly entered daily life, showing the status in the halls of nobles and turning into a performance prop in the festivals of ordinary people. The same lamp plays completely different roles in different occasions and in the hands of different groups of people, as if it has become a cultural medium connecting different social groups and different levels.

From a synchronic perspective, this functional expansion is actually a continuous social interaction. Lion-shaped lamps are no longer just lighting tools; they have gradually become carriers of emotions and beliefs, condensing the common memories, local knowledge and value identity of people in specific regions [11]. Especially in the folk context, people often integrate lion-shaped lamps into performances during festivals, and convey the simple wishes for a bumper harvest and family peace through stylized ritual movements. Although the shapes vary slightly in different regions, the common yearning for auspiciousness silently strengthens the collective memory and cultural identity among Chinese communities.

In this way, through the use, interpretation and endowment of new meanings by generations of people, lion-shaped lamps have completed the local transformation from the sacred beast of the Western Regions to

the auspicious lion of China. This process is not only a clear path of cultural integration, but also makes lion-shaped lamps themselves a silent material history, which witnesses how the Chinese civilization, with a calm and creative attitude, transforms foreign objects into a part of its own cultural fabric.

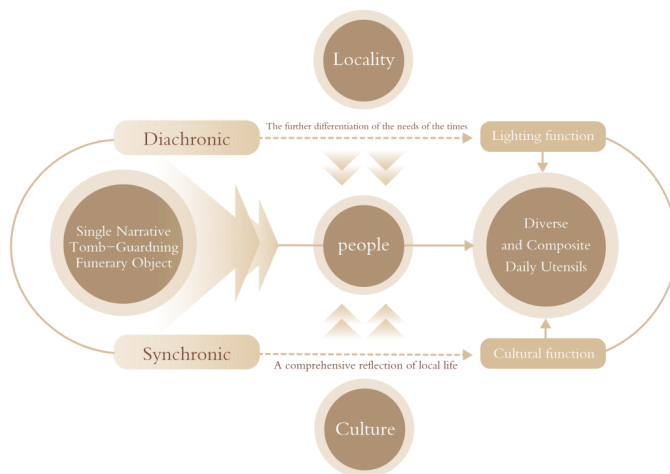


Figure 6. Analysis of the functional expansion of lion-shaped lamps

5. From tradition to innovation: contemporary design enlightenments from the local wisdom of lion-shaped lamps

5.1. Modern enlightenments from the design wisdom of traditional artifact creation thought

The research on the traditional artifact creation design of lion-shaped lamps emphasizes the traceability and contextual inheritance of design. The local transformation design of lion-shaped lamps has spanned thousands of years, providing a profound historical mirror for local design practice in today's globalized era. The local design process of lion-shaped lamps shows that the core wisdom of traditional Chinese culture lies in its strong inclusiveness in the face of heterogeneous cultures and its ability of selective absorption and creative transformation. In today's world where globalization leads to cultural convergence, the research on the design practice of lion-shaped lamps proves that the real vitality of a culture lies precisely in its ability to adhere to and highlight the subjectivity with local experience and local knowledge while communicating with the world. It reminds us that the "place" in contemporary local design is not a closed and static container, but a procedural existence that continuously produces meaning in dynamic communication, which can serve as both the root of cultural production and a node of cultural diffusion [12]. The functional narrative of lion-shaped lamps from sacred to secular is essentially a local narrative from object to emotion, thus effectively resisting the risk of the dilution of the meaning of cultural symbols in the global context.

5.2. Construction of contemporary local design methodology

Based on the deconstruction of the local path of lion-shaped lamps, a set of methodology applicable to contemporary local design can be extracted. Its core framework lies in reconstructing the dynamic circular relationship among "humans", "place" and "culture". "Place" is a field carrying the natural foundation and historical levels, providing unique geographical genes and constraint conditions for design; "humans", as the subject with perception and creativity, are the practitioners who interpret the place and endow it with new meanings; "culture" is a symbolic system and core of meaning formed by continuous refinement and

translation [13]. The specific practical path of this methodology can be summarized as a trilogy of "Perception - Relying - Expression" (Figure 7).

This process can be regarded as an in-depth "local translation", which starts with the designer's in-depth "field immersion" after putting aside presuppositions, mobilizing the five senses to perceive local life and acquire experience, forming a "sense of locality" that can understand the local behavioral logic and aesthetic preferences. Thus, the "sending" and "receiving" of design information can both be based on real local experience [4], making design a social output behavior that connects humans and places and further stimulates emotional resonance. Then it is necessary to sort out the cultural pedigree of the place, generating "real scenes" and "virtual scenes" from the material geographical features, artifacts and other objects, scenes to the conscious field of rituals, dialects, legends and so on. Finally, the designer carries out creative translation of the extracted cultural symbols, condensing the abstract local spirit into a concrete object. Good local design has vitality, which can make people re-perceive the place and elevate it from a simple material carrier to an emotional sustenance [11]. The evolution of lion-shaped lamps is precisely a unique form and functional narrative derived from the underlying cultural structure of China such as "worshipping auspiciousness", etiquette system and philosophy.

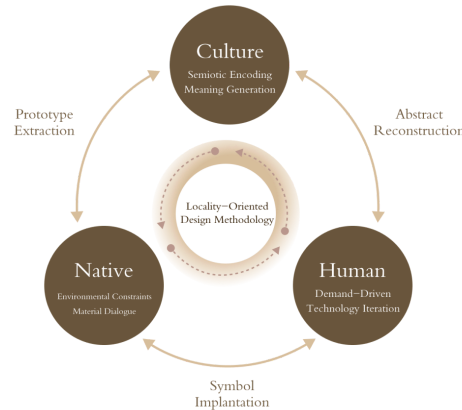


Figure 7. Analysis of the functional expansion of lion-shaped lamps

5.3. Innovative prospect of the application of local design

Local design is about the future, and especially in the global context, it will become an important bridge connecting the local and the world. The evolution of lion-shaped lamps reminds us that real local design is far more than the simple migration of symbols, but an injection and sublimation of meaning. It needs to closely connect the unique local objects, crafts and stories with the common human emotions, such as the yearning for a better life [14]. Thus creating works that have distinct regional marks and can arouse resonance across cultures.

Future design practice may carry a dual mission: first, to dig deep down, return to specific places [9], awaken the emotional connection between humans and the land through design, and make the place a source of identity and emotional attachment; second, to transcend upward, and attempt to carry out a universal translation of local symbols. This requires inheriting the wisdom of openness and integration in Chinese culture, reinterpreting local elements in a broader context, making them not only inherit the local spirit, but also become a language for the world to understand China. In today's world of frequent global cultural interactions, design innovation with Locality as the core is perhaps a soft yet firm path, which allows civilizations to maintain themselves in dialogue and continue to grow in innovation.

6. Conclusion

This study, with "Locality" as the clue, traces the transformation of lion-shaped lamps from the sacred beast of the Western Regions to the auspicious beast of China. Under the influence of agricultural civilization, the lion gradually lost its original ferocity and mystery, and its image slowly transformed from a tomb-guarding object into a tame auspicious beast on the desk. This is more than a change in form and decoration, but a rebirth of functional narrative rooted in specific time and space. When it moved from the divine altar to the eaves of secular houses, it not only illuminated the night, but also carried people's expectations for auspiciousness and community identity. This process vividly interprets the wisdom of Chinese artifact creation in tolerating and reconstructing foreign cultures, in which the repeated interaction of "humans, place and culture" outlines a unique local design wisdom. The millennium-long story of lion-shaped lamps has written a brilliant prologue for it, and the unfinished chapter is waiting to be continued by contemporary designers.

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