

## PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

# Research on a White Marble Statue of the Hanyuan Hall in Daming Palace

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## ABSTRACT

In 1995-1996, a white marble statue was discovered during the archaeological work of the Hanyuan Hall in Daming palace. Not much attention has been paid by historians to this statue due to its loss. Based on textual research on the land, grade, clothing and action of this white marble statue, this article infers that the white marble statue is a Hu person (ethnic minorities and foreigners in China) holding an animal figurine. The white marble statue indicates the significance of tribute. The figurine of a Hu person holding an animal corroborates the historical records of paying tribute in Hanyuan Hall in historical books.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese academy of social sciences has conducted systematic archaeological excavations of the Daming palace twice and issued two archaeological excavation reports. These two excavations provide archaeological data for scholars to study the construction, scope and fortifications of Chang'an palace in Sui and Tang Dynasties. On this basis, in the 1960s, the restoration of Daming palace also made a series of important breakthroughs. In the 1995-1996 excavation report, a white marble statue unearthed in Hanyuan Hall attracted the author's attention. The excavated photos show the white marble statue was carved with the technology of round carving. The action features are standing, holding a little curly-tailed beast, narrow sleeves, with a belt, and accessories hung around the waist, but the white marble statue has not been paid attention to by historians.

## 2. PLACE OF EXCAVATION AND GRADE OF THE STATUE

The 1995-1996 excavation report didn't give a detailed description of the excavation site of this white marble statue, but only mentioned in general terms that the relics excavated from the Hanyuan Hall were "mainly brick and stone building components, mostly from around the base of the hall and brick kiln sites... most of the cultural relics of Hanyuan Hall from the Tang dynasty culture layer, a small part from the early Sui and Tang Dynasties culture layer, and there are only a few broken tiles and broken bricks on the other two layers" [1]. In addition, most of the artifacts unearthed from the brick and tile kiln site of Hanyuan Hall are remnants of brick and tile materials. Only 4 of the 133 stone relics unearthed from Hanyuan Hall are white marble relics (lotus pattern stone carving, stone statue, white marble statue and a chess piece). So this white marble statue should be unearthed of the Tang culture layer, the place is around the Hanyuan Hall base rather than the brick and tile kiln site.




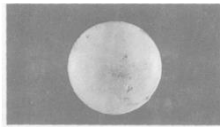
To clarify the function of this white marble statue, the researcher explores it from the following two aspects:

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one is the material of the statue, and the other is the carving process. At the beginning of the construction of the Hanyuan Hall, there were strict regulations on the use of building materials. Taking the use of stone materials as an example, the column foundation stone, the fence stone and tread fence stone used for load-bearing is made of hard cyan limestone; small plates and stone bowls used for decorations are light cyan stones with fine texture. Although the material of these chi dragon head fragments is not mentioned explicitly in the excavation report, the color and texture of the excavation photos show that these dragon head fragments should also be the same material of stone. Of the 133 stone relics, only 4 were made of white marble (Lotus stone, stone statue pedestal, white marble statue and a chess piece), and all of them were made using circular carving techniques, therefore, these 4 white marble relics should also be the same level.

Since the Han dynasty, the royal family began to use white marble in the building, especially the high-grade palace railings, statues, Stone sculpture. Tang dynasty

poet Cui Hao wrote a poem "White Jade balustrade and gold columns" to describe the magnificent palace of Emperor Cao Cao's. The "White Jade Balustrade" refers to the white marble balustrade. So are the 4 white marble relics a part of the palace railings? The answer to this problem needs to consider from the size, shape, material and so on of these 4 white marble relics. In the Hanyuan Hall, two broken carved columns were unearthed. In Chinese architecture, carved columns were usually used on the railings beside bridges or on the sides of large buildings and tombs. In accordance with the carved columns shape of the Sui and Tang dynasties, the head of carved columns should use round carving techniques. These 4 pieces of white marble relics also happened to use the round carving techniques. So are these four white marble artifacts part of the carved capitals? For the convenience of comparative study, the details of these white marble sculptures are listed in Table 1 (compiled from the excavation report of Hanyuan Hall site of Daming palace from 1995 to 1996).

| Name                        | Number   | Shape Description  | Size   | Picture   |
|-----------------------------|----------|--|--|---|
| Lotus pattern stone carving | T401:194 | The top surface is smoothly ground and restored as a circular tabletop, with a circle of lotus petals carved beneath it.   | Recovery, Diameter: 42cm; Residual height: 10cm.   |  |
| Stone statue base           | T218:203 | Probably around carved lion seat, rectangular. The four walls of the seat carved with sea garnet flowers.  | Seat length: 35.8 cm; Width: 30.5cm; Height: 8 cm. |  |
| White marble statue         | T218:202 | A round sculpture of a man standing, with his head and left arm missing, wearing narrow sleeves and a natural sagging pattern of clothing; the figure is holding a small beast with a curly tail with tail on his chest; the head of the beast is not present. | Residual height: 18.1cm; Width: 7.8 cm.            |  |
| Piece                       | T509:250 | Flat and round.  | Diameter: 2cm.                                     |  |

**Table 1.** Comparison table of marble remains features.

Table 1 shows that the bottom surface of the lotus stone sculpture (T401:194) is circular, the bottom area is estimated 1384.74cm<sup>2</sup>. The bottom surface of the lion statue (T218:203) is rectangular, estimated bottom area is 1091.9cm<sup>2</sup>. The two carved columns are both regular octahedrons, with side lengths of 12.4cm and 14cm, respectively. According to the formula for calculating the area of a regular octahedron, the cross-sectional areas are 523 cm<sup>2</sup> and 667 cm<sup>2</sup>. It can be seen that the base areas of the lotus flower carving (T401:194) and the lion statue (T218:203) are much larger than the cross-sectional areas of these carved columns, so they cannot be the head of these columns. Although the surviving parts of the white marble statue (T218:202) and the piece (T509:250) do not involve the base and the base area cannot be determined, they do not conform to the carving style of the column of the Tang dynasty. The fact that the same material was generally used for the body and capitals of the columns in ancient architecture makes the stone of the two. In summary, these 4 pieces of white marble statue relics are not likely to be the head of the carved columns, and it is inferred that they should be higher-grade sculptures in the Hanyuan Hall of Daming palace.

From the photos in the excavation report, the white marble statue has some characteristics of Hu Clothes. Hu Clothes were prevalent in the Tang dynasty, first as a uniform in the military camps, and then slowly evolved into regular clothing in the daily life of the Tang people. Mr. Guowei Wang believes that the introduction of the Hu Clothes can be traced back to the time of King Wu Ling of Zhao. Significantly, the images of tombs and burial figurines before the Northern and Southern Dynasties are rarely seen. It was not until the Sui and Tang Dynasties that Hu Clothes images and Hu clothes burial figurines in the tomb were more common. The acceptance of Hu Clothes by all classes in the Tang dynasty was much higher than before. Before the Tang dynasty, it was hard to find women wearing Hu Clothes in history books. In the murals in the tombs of the Tang dynasty, women wearing Hu Clothes and holding objects are often depicted in scenes showing the life of the tomb owners as they played, feasted, and played. In these informal scenes, there seems to be no limit for female waiters to choosing to wear Hu Clothes or Ru skirts.

In the murals of the Duan Jianbis tomb of the Tang dynasty, only one of the groups of maids wears Hu Clothes, while others wear Ru skirt. But in the murals of Xincheng tomb of the Tang Princess, the number of maids wearing Hu Clothes has increased, and is no longer one. There are two ways to wear the collar of

Hu Clothes: one is an open lapel, and the other is a round collar.

In all murals, the style of Hu Clothes worn by the maid is very similar. It is worth noting that although the Tang dynasty has a high degree of acceptance of Hu Clothes, the clothes of officials on important occasions still need to comply with costume laws of the Tang dynasty, such as "Yu Fu Zhi", "Yi Wei Zhi" and "Li Le Zhi". The "Yu Fu Zhi" has stipulated, according to the grade of officials, "the third grade has been put on purple, the fourth and fifth grades have been put on red, the sixth and seventh grades are green, and the eighth and ninth grades are green" [2]. Officials are distinguished from each other in terms of crown and hat, color, and decoration, and the waist has a jade plate and ribbon, all of which reflect the political order of the Tang dynasty. This hierarchical political order was also applied to pictorial texts.

This political order still exists in Yan Libens "Bu Nian Figure". There are 13 persons in the picture, which can be classified into four groups: the emperor Taizong, the emissary of Tubo, officials of Tang and maids. The two most important persons in the picture, the emperor Taizong and the emissary of Tubo, each has their distinctive clothing. The two officials of the Tang dynasty are the same images, and they dress official clothes with a round collar. Maids are the most numerous groups in the picture, they have 9 persons (6 for Lift the Dragon Chair, 2 for holding palm fans and 1 holding umbrella). They have the same style of Ru skirt and the makeup. Even the red brocade shoes are also similar. In the "Bu Nian Figure", the painter highlights Taizong and the emissary of Tubo, and illustrates the political order and culture of the Tang dynasty. Officials and maidens from the Tang dynasty had the same clothes, which were very different from those of foreign envoys. This once again proved that the Tang dynasty, the acceptance of Hu clothing is very high, but on important occasions still need to comply with the "Yufu Zhi", "Yi Weizhi", "Lile Zhi" and other clothing requirements.

To sum up, due to the white marble statue was unearthed in an important political place — Hanyuan Hall of Daming palace, the meaning of the Hu clothes worn by the white marble statue should be the same as the meaning of the official clothes worn by all officials in the formal occasion that is obvious that clothes have an effect on marking political in the Tang dynasty. Therefore, even if the head of the statue is missing, we can still name it "Hu person holding Animal Figurine" according to the material and clothing characteristics of the statue.

Since the Tang dynasty, images of Hu people offering treasures to emperor have often appeared in paintings, sculptures and porcelain, even folk stories such as "Hu people identify treasures". Before the Sui dynasty, the Hu people in Central Asia had established ties with the Chinese through the Silk Road.

In the year 630, because of war, the nine surnamed Hu people in the Turkic Khanate and some ethnic crowds in the western regions migrated into nearby, a large number of Hu persons were included. One of the main migration routes was to enter the northern border of the Tang through the western areas of Asia. When the Hanyuan Hall was built in 662, many Sogdian entered the capital of the Tang. At that time, there was even a guard composed of Sogdian in the Daming palace. The clothing of Sogdian was very common in murals and carvings of the Tang. Yuling Zhang believes these Hu clothes have the characteristics of Sogdian costumes, and in these murals the Hu clothes dressed by maids were Sogdian costumes [3]. Because the white marble statue has narrow sleeves, high boots and accessories hung on the waist, these are in accordance with the characteristics of Sogdian costumes, the white marble statue most likely depicts a Sogdian holding a beast to pay tribute to the Tang.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF HANYUAN HALL

To explore the identity of the white marble statue, it is inseparable from the analysis of the political function of the Hanyuan Hall. It is the main hall of Daming palace in Chang'an of Tang, and was built in 662. The Tang dynasty followed the system of the palace of Zhou rites that imperial palace must have three main halls. They are named Outer Hall, Middle Hall and Inner Hall. Ye Mengde of the Song dynasty described in detail the three main halls of Daming palace in the book "Shilin Yan". "Dengwen drum, lung stone and external court activities in the Cheng Tian Gate of Taiji Palace have been moved to the Hanyuan Hall. Through the amnesty, change the year title of an emperor's reign and other etiquette programs, the Danfeng Gate, including Hanyuan Hall were combined in one political space, they were outer court" [4]. In a word, Hanyuan Hall is outer hall. One of the important functions of the outer hall is to hold tribute activities.

As early as the Qin dynasty, the central government and surrounding areas had used the tributary system to clarify the central and surrounding areas order. The surrounding areas gifts are local specialties, rare treasures, exotic animals, etc. in generally. The central governments gifts are generally gold and silver, silk, medicinal materials, spices, etc. Honglusi is responsible for the registration and verification of

tribute and returned items in accordance. According to historical records, the value of goods given by the central government to surrounding areas is often several times the value of surrounding areas tribute to the central government. Thus, for the central government, the political significance of the tributary system is far greater than the economic significance.

In order to show the majesty of the emperor, the Tang formulated a series of measures to standardize the tributary system. In terms of institutional setting, the Tang set up an official position, Honglusi, ordering it to "identify the rank of all foreigners and tributes and treat them with guests" [5]. In order to cooperate with the foreign affairs activities of Honglusi, the Tang also set up department of vassal and other departments under the ministry of rites. These departments are responsible for their respective responsibilities and jointly cooperate in receiving and managing the tributary system of envoys and guests from various countries. In terms of laws and regulations, the Tang promulgated laws and regulations applicable to all tributary countries, such as "Zhen Guan rites", "Xian Qing rites", "Tang Kai Yuan rites" and so on. These laws and regulations made a detailed provision on the vassal states and foreigners to the tribute and pilgrimage activities. In addition, the Tang government asked the offices of the Military Ministry to draw the appearance and clothes of all the foreign envoys who came to pay tribute. This was one of the important measures to strengthen the archives management of tributary countries in the Tang dynasty. The "Guest Ambassador Figure" and "Bu Nian Figure" are all historical pictures of the Tang welcoming the tributary of all directions.

If the perspective is switched from "center" to "surrounding", the tributary system also had a far-reaching impact on the regimes of ethnic minorities. First of all, many regimes of ethnic minorities were voluntary and active to the tributary system in the Tang dynasty, which is also known as "internal attachment". There is an interesting phenomenon to prove the above statement, ethnic minorities in the grassland area respect the local leader as "Khan", and the emperor of the Tang dynasty is respected by them as "Tian Khan". This kind of called has a strong nature of national identity. Taking the areas along the Silk Road as an example, ethnic minority regimes such as Huns, Turk and Xianbei have been living here since the Han dynasty. When these nomadic minorities compete with others, wars often break out here and the boundaries of regimes of ethnicity are constantly updated. On the other hand, the neighbor Tang, as the center of agricultural civilization, has political power stable and national strength strong. In order to occupy an advantageous position in the national competition and ensure the stable development of the nation, the

minority regime will take the initiative to apply to become an affiliated country of the Tang dynasty, in order to get the protection of the Tang dynasty. For example, in the early Kaiyuan, the war between Kang and Arab was frequent in Central Asia, Kang sent envoys to pay tribute many times, hoping that the Tang dynasty would send troops to help attack Arab. It is a rule that once the minority regime and the Tang dynasty formed an internal attachment, both sides of the tribute should abide by the agreement of "advance and retreat together". Therefore, the political alliance formed by taking the tribute as the external expression is a voluntary and active national identity of the minority regime to the Tang dynasty.

The Tang implemented a highly autonomous ethnic policy towards ethnic minority areas. The Tang implemented the policy in various ethnic minority areas and set up local leader to manage ethnic minority affairs. The ethnic minorities in the Tang dynasty enjoy more political status than lots of dynasties. Not only leaders of ethnic minority areas can choose ethnic minorities, but also the people of ethnic minorities can join the central government as officials. They enjoy the same political status as the people of the Tang. In 630, after Taizong subdued the East Turks, more than 100 ethnic minorities, including the West Turks, held official positions above the fifth grade in the central government. In addition, the Tang clearly stipulates that after the surrender, the minority people do not need to change customs all of their tribes and follow their laws. The people in minority areas can make a pilgrimage to the emperor of Tang in their national traditional costumes. Under this tolerant ethnic policy, ethnic minority areas can receive economic assistance from the central government if there is a political tie with the central government. For ethnic minority areas, this is a very "cost-effective" political decision.

The process of implementing the tribute system, political system, ethical order, architectural culture and technology of the Tang dynasty further affected surrounding areas. Foreigners living in Chang'an in the Tang dynasty included Tibetan, Japanese, Koreans, Sogdian, Persians, etc. Many of them entered Chang'an with the tribute team in the name of "offering treasure for the Tang". They did not leave immediately after offering treasure, but traveled to famous cities in the prosperous Tang such as Chang'an and Luoyang, and even became officials in central government. When they returned home, they transmitted the advanced technology of the Tang dynasty back to their local place, such as "the capital city of Pingcheng in Japan in the 8th century and the capital city of Ping'an at the end of the 8th century, and since the 9th century their

shape and layout have imitated Chang'an and Luoyang in the Tang dynasty, especially Chang'an City" [6]. Such examples are numerous. The Tang established diplomatic relations with over 300 regimes, which not only reflected the grandeur of the prosperous era of The Tang, but also reflected the cohesion of the political and cultural center of The Tang.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on research on this white marble statue, this article infers that the statue is a Hu person holding an animal figurine. In ancient China Hu people include ethnic minorities and foreigners. It is recorded in many historical books, the emperor of the Tang dynasty held the conduct "hearing of all people's advice" and tribute activities in the Hanyuan Hall. The Tang dynasty formulated laws and regulations such as Zhenguan rites, to regulate the order of tribute. In this article, a white marble statue of Hanyuan Hall in Daming palace was confirmed to be a Hu person holding an animal, and proved the historical records of ethnic minorities and foreigners in China paying tribute to Hanyuan Hall of Daming palace.

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