

# The Aesthetics of Chinese Characters in the Period of Libian

## Take “丝” (silk) Characters For Example

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### ABSTRACT

The character architecture and the spatial structure of Chinese characters' strokes in the process of Libian (variations on the clerical script) displays certain aesthetic characteristics. This paper aims to investigate the aesthetic embodiment of Chinese characters in the process of their evolution. Based on the theory of humanized natural aesthetics, this paper explores the aesthetic significance of the Chinese characters as a result of the interaction between natural society and human aesthetic consciousness, as reflected in the changes of the character "silk" in different periods through comparative analysis. The results reveal that the development of the oracle bone script from the budding stage of the script is a copy of the 'species scale', and then the development of the script strokes and spatial structure is an artificial presentation of the aesthetic consciousness of the 'inherent scale' in the changes of the Chinese characters. In this way, the human subject's consciousness has taken on a unique aesthetic value in the evolution of Chinese characters.

**Keywords:** Chinese characters, Humanized nature, the laws of beauty, the aesthetic in the period of Libian.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The period from 470 BC to 220 AD marked a boundary between ancient and modern Chinese characters, during which the strokes and spatial structure of Chinese characters exhibited certain aesthetic characteristics. Libian refers the phenomenon of the evolution and change of the script that has continuous development clues to the generation of the official script.[1] The nature of Chinese characters as pictographs is to reflect society, and as the needs of society change, people no longer only seek to map the natural world, but more often add their own sense of needs and aesthetic sensibilities to the process of labour practice. Chinese characters are one of the best proofs that man is not lost in the object - the natural world. The Chinese characters focus on man reflecting the subjective world and continuing to create beauty, guided by objective stimuli and guided by beauty, particularly evident in the Libian stage, which is a watershed in Chinese characters.

Chinese characters exist as one of the products of beauty in the relationship between man and nature. The theory of "Humanized nature" reveals the essence and

root of the beauty of Chinese characters, which is the unity of social and natural nature. "Humanized nature": the object nature transformed by human in practice, which embodies human's social content and confirms human's essential power. [2] "Humanised nature", subjectified and socialised nature, is the productive activity of man and is the prerequisite for the generation of natural beauty to man. "Humanized nature" is based on human social practice. Human beings produce material according to the law of beauty, and also engage in spiritual production according to the law of beauty. Artistic production belongs to the concentrated creation of beauty.[3] Nor is the Chinese character a mere copy of nature but a reconstruction of objective things in human consciousness, a 'symbol' transforms from pictograph to abstract simplicity.




Present study of Libian (the clerical variation), most researchers consider it as a product of historical evolution or a documentary source for a particular study. These studies are often limited to the practical skills of writing the script, often ignoring its aesthetic value as an individual. This paper aims to explore whether there is certain aesthetic value in the evolution of Chinese

characters, by applying the aesthetic theory of 'Humanised nature' to investigate what aesthetic awareness and practical guidance people have developed in the process of clerical changes as they have become more aware of social practices and nature.

This essay will take the character “丝” (silk) as an example. The first part of the essay begins by explaining that Chinese characters are the product of human labour, followed by a discussion of how people create Chinese characters under the guidance of aesthetic laws as they labour to create beauty. Finally, it argues that as humans appreciate the products of human labour, its constantly infused with a new aesthetic consciousness. The second part of the paper will analyse the details of the strokes and spatial structure of Libian, followed by an exploration of the spiritual aspects of human productive activity in accordance with the laws of beauty, and concludes with an analysis of the way in which humans have used their own aesthetic perception of nature to create the unique strokes and spatial contextual beauty of the clerical script.


## 2. THROUGH LABOR, HUMAN BEINGS CREATE CHINESE CHARACTERS AND BEAUTY

### 2.1. Labor is the premise of the production of Chinese characters, naturalization, and beauty




Chinese characters are the result of people's labor after practice in nature, as well as the result of naturalization. Chinese characters are different from pinyin characters in that they are all social forms, reflecting the natural world where people have relationships with real strokes. The formation of Chinese characters is the ancestors' perception of the objective world and the combination of things and things. [4] For example the twined thread is called “丝” (silk) . Human beings actively tend to interact with the objective existence, and the appearance of the word “丝” (silk) is the depiction of its form when human beings work with “丝” (silk). There is no word “纺线” in oracle bone script, only “𠂔、𠂔、(𠂔)、𠂔(𠂔)、𠂔(𠂔)” to express textile. The  is the initial element of “𠂔、𠂔、(𠂔)、𠂔(𠂔)、𠂔(𠂔)”, and its form like a ball of twine. 𠂔  like a ball of twine on the hand. From this group of characters, we can see the life trajectory of our ancestors and also see the development of Chinese silk industry. We find that although objective natural objects have natural material aesthetic attributes, they must produce aesthetic consciousness in human labor practice.




Labor is the division between human beings and animals, and the human beings practice human in nature is actually the labor process. As the result of human labor,

the labor process is completed under the action of the law of beauty. The law of beauty is that human beings transform the objective world in the process of labor practice according to the laws of different things in the objective world and in combination with the purpose and desire of people with individual characteristics. [5] Every stroke of Chinese characters contains the aesthetic consciousness and rules of beauty of our ancestors. Human Labour is carried out according to the laws of beauty, but animal Labour is not. Therefore, the law of beauty should be the unique characteristics of human production and labor. [6] For example :Oracle

bone script “傳”  like a man spinning a wheel. At that time, spinning was no longer a mechanical manual work, but injected into people's thinking, indicating the meaning of transmission, transmission, and representing the spiritual connotation of inheritance. In the life of animals, although they are also engaged in activities to maintain their own lives, they can not be called labor, because animals lack self-knowledge and spiritual connotation transmission, so their activities naturally do not follow the rules of beauty.

Chinese characters are the product of the function of assisting human memory, that is, a simple practical relationship. With the improvement of human labor level, Chinese characters and human beings have developed an aesthetic relationship, and beauty has been born. Human beings not only work according to the law of beauty, but also beauty itself is created by human beings in the process of labor practice. Beauty is closely related to human labor, so we cannot talk about beauty without human labor, nor can we talk about the law of beauty without human labor. [7] Through self-labor practice, human not only “creates a world of objects” for himself, but also “visualizes himself in the world he creates”. [8] Human existence consciousness, with subjective and Writing practice is the fundamental driving force of the shape change of Chinese characters. objective understanding, in the objective world of human not only actively carry out production work, but also appreciate

the fruits of labor into self-consciousness.  is made for  and . Yi, reel off raw silk from cocoons. [9] According to textual research, Chinese people may have mastered the technology of silk reeling and weaving


since the late Neolithic period.   is . For the convenience of writing, it is simplified. In the deformation of the form, the creation of symbols is the expression of beauty creation.

## 2.2. People are the subject of labor, creating Chinese characters and beauty

Chinese characters are the basic reason that human beings work in nature according to the law of beauty -- human beings are free and conscious. Chinese characters reflect the natural society, but they are not completely social representation. After the maturity of the practical relationship, the aesthetic relationship develops further, and the development of the booster is the human thinking and emotion. People with their own activities to cause natural material changes, in order to meet the needs of people's material life, is a practical relationship. But along with the practical relationship comes the aesthetic relationship. [10] With the development of Chinese characters from Oracle bone script to Xiaozhuan, the expression of human thinking and consciousness is constantly strengthened. In 《Yishan Tablet》 [11] the character "经" on the left part of the oracle bone inscriptions is like the silk thread of a spinning wheel. When spinning, the vertical line does not move, which is opposite to the weft. The ancients thought this was immutable, so it was extended to "Jing, law rule".[12] It means the common principle, principle. In the process of spinning, the ancients turned from discovering rules to following them through perception and appreciation, and the development of dynamic thinking consciousness was firmly recorded in Chinese characters.

Chinese characters are influenced by people's senses, that is, external things bring stimulation to people, so that people's thinking can produce a sense of painting. Through writing tools, Chinese characters are finally born. In this process, the practical relationship and the ideographic function are accurately conveyed, also, the aesthetic relationship tends to be stable. Human labor is no longer instinctive, but creative. The reason why the law of beauty is the law of beauty is that we can treat the objective world freely and create the objective world freely according to the law of the objective world. Human is aware that he is working and why. In his work, he has a clear consciousness and purpose. [13] The Chinese characters in Xiao Zhuan have clear directivity and connotation. In 《Yishan Tablet》 [11] the character

 is made for  and . The  is like a thread of

silk. The  is like a person catch a bird, So the form of is like a person catch a bird with the net which is made of silk thread. Original meaning: A large rope attached to a thing. "Wei, A rope tied to the hood of the car".[14] Confucianism in the Spring and Autumn period advocated etiquette and law, and people created "维纲", "维" was endowed with a more abstract meaning, that is, to maintain ethics, ethics, laws and regulations are firmly tied with a rope. In social practice, people discover the laws of objective things and pour in their thoughts and

emotions, so that nature contains the value belonging to people including aesthetic value.

Relying on nature, Chinese characters are the product of beauty after people work, that is, the beauty of Chinese characters is natural beauty. There is no aesthetic relationship between natural nature and human beings, so there is no beauty or un-beauty. Only when people feel nature, nature has natural beauty, and Chinese characters are the best evidence for people to feel nature, that is, the aesthetic relationship with nature is embodied in Chinese characters. The whole so-called history of the world is nothing but the history of man through his Labour, the history of man through nature. [15] As soon as the image of art appears, humans and animals are completely separated. The animal only sustains the physical existence through its labor, while the man creates the world he desires through labor, that is, the world of beauty. Of course, the coexistence of this beautiful world is not achieved overnight, but the purpose of human survival, human development from natural man to social man, is the history of continuous creation of beautiful world. Before the transition, Chinese characters appeared as the nature of humanization, while after the transition, Chinese characters tended to be the evidence of the beautiful world created by human beings. The basic core of the transition was the simplification of Chinese characters, in which the pictographic nature was weakened while the symbolic nature was strengthened, that is, human beings injected more beautiful thinking into Chinese characters instead of being limited to depicting nature.

## 3. LIBIAN IS A LABOR PRACTICE OF HUMAN FOLLOWING THE LAWS OF BEAUTY

The Libian in Chinese characters is created by people in practice according to the laws of beauty. It is the product of the rational purpose of society combine with natural perceptual cognition. Man also shapes objects in accordance with the laws of beauty. [16] As the subject of labor, human beings create beauty through labor and create Chinese characters under the guidance of the law of beauty. And the law of beauty is the measure that human beings grasp the law of objective things and guide creation. This scale is in line with Wangheng Chen's explanation of Karl Heinrich Marx's "there are two scales of human labor": "The scale of species" belongs to things, while "the subject of the sentence 'intrinsic scale' should be human". [17] Human beings constantly practice and recognize objective things, from which they create unique strokes and spatial structures of Chinese characters, which internally carry rules of beauty of different scales.

### 3.1. Libian strokes of artificial transformation

Strokes of Chinese characters are the result of beautifying Chinese characters consciously according to one's own purpose and needs. Human beings seek natural laws in the process of practice, and in the process of dealing with the balance of being restricted and taking the initiative to use it, their labor creation is according to the laws of beauty. Practice includes opposing and unifying aspects about knowledge and ability, reason and sensibility, content and form, and so on ... As the ancient Chinese painting theory goes, "From the outside, the heart comes from the middle." The so-called "external teacher fortune" is to understand "the scale of everything"; "The source of the heart" is the "intrinsic scale" of human beings. [18] Human observation of "the scale of any species" is to "master nature" to grasp the characteristics of objective things, such as the mellow silkworm head, the steady swallow tail in nature, into the "twists and turns" of Libian strokes.

The essence of the law of beauty embodied by Libian strokes are that people can create literature and art according to the "inherent scale" on the basis of grasping the "species scale". The "measure of species" is about objective characteristics, while the "intrinsic measure" is about the characteristics of the subject. Only by combining the two can the "law of beauty" be formed. [19] As early as the formation of Chinese characters, human beings created Oracle bone script and Xiaozhuan according to the "scale of species" by describing the natural world. Later, in the transition period when strokes were formed, human beings, as active subjects, consciously retrofits Chinese characters according to their own purposes and needs, and re-evaluated the objective world under the restriction of the laws of nature. According to the "inherent scale" of Chinese characters, personal aesthetic consciousness and emotional expression were added into the characters of Official script, which not only shaped objects through labor and created literary wealth, but also brought spiritual enjoyment and created beauty.

The formation of strokes, the biggest feature of scribe change, is the manifestation of people's cognition of the "inherent scale" of Chinese characters. By artificially changing the melodic lines of Xiaozhuan into broken strokes, the writing efficiency is improved, and then the aesthetic consciousness of the subject is added to construct the unique aesthetic rules of Chinese characters.

From the change of "𠂔" of 《Yuan An Tablet》 [20] and "𠂔" of 《Cao Quan Tablet》 [21], it can be found that although li script retains a large number of traces of seal script, it began to strengthen the changes of hand feel, highlighting the creation of people's heart and mind. In the early days, the brushwork of Libian was rough and stiff, which was in the subjective exploration to solve the

need of convenience. Mature Official script style strokes, such as "silk worm head and goose tail" (also known as waves of strokes), are full of dynamic aesthetic feeling, which is the result of human creation based on "inherent scale".

Clerical script unique main finishing touch of the punchline -- "Waves of stroke", which is the human to natural practice for a long time to observe the "inherent scale" presentation. After the Han Dynasty, with the clerical script "Waves of stroke" horizontal lines developed together on the building of "Flying eave", became the symbol characteristics of East Asia. [22] The formation of "Waves of stroke" of Libian strokes, and the Chinese architectural characteristic "Flying eave", are the description of natural birds and beautification summary. This variation of stroke plays the visual effect of the main pen's finishing touch in the composition of Chinese characters, forming a unique sense of beauty of Chinese characters with dynamic and static balance and uneven changes. Libian not only has such subtle changes in strokes, but also presents the unity of overall changes and stability through the construction of different strokes. For


example, the cross-fold stroke of the right part of "𠂔" of 《Cao Quan Tablet》 [21], which is a horizontal smooth static potential and the hook stroke is a "flying goose" dynamic potential, which echoes the natural beauty of combination of dynamic and static.

### 3.2. Libian space of artificial creation

Spatial structure of Chinese characters is a human on the natural aesthetic visual creation. This spatial structure reflects man's grasp of "intrinsic scale", in the writing carrier presents the human to the nature macro aesthetic consciousness. People who are able to appreciate the beauty of nature are not only formed in the process of labor practices, but also develop and change in the process of labor practices. [23] Human after meet the accumulation of basic material life, inevitably towards the pursuit of spiritual life. The evolution of Libian has evolved from satisfying the needs of material life, such as enhancing the efficiency of writing, to a conclusion of the "intrinsic scale" of the aesthetics of aesthetics of nature occurring to man, and projected into the creation of a written spatial layout. Immersed in nature, the ancients applied their the "laws of beauty" as perceived to the spatial structure of Chinese characters.

The spatial structure of Libian is under the guidance of human thinking consciousness, according to the law of beauty, the font is changed from a thin rectangle to a steady "eight-cent" square body. In the Eastern Han dynasty of the chapter king, Cizhong Wang decorated the clerical script as eight points, realizing the artistic enhancement of the divided script. [24] The formation of the eight-point Official script was influenced by the ruling culture of the Qin and Han dynasties. For example,



during the Qin and Han dynasties, people were concerned with following the example of nature, promoting the principle of 'the circle of heaven and the square of earth'. This principle led to the increasingly square spatial structure of official script at this time, combining with the dynamics of Libian strokes, showing combination of motion and static of aesthetic feeling. Such as “” of《Cao Quan Tablet》[21], the stroke “捺” is in the shape of a wild goose's tail, and the spatial structure tends to be square and static. The combination of the two is quite aesthetically pleasing.

The space of structure and composition of Chinese characters in Libian is the ancient literati immersed in landscape space feels the unique visual aesthetic artistic conception. The artistic conception of the whole ... It's based on your own emotions, through the feeling of the heart, to ingest certain objects, to form a scene or circumstance, thus forming a self-contained art world. [25] The writer's understanding of the natural world feels the beautiful artistic conception of "A sparse horse can run, a wind cannot blow in intensive", refining and developing aesthetic standards such as white space. In calligraphy, the cloth white problem of each word is called "Jie ti", the layout of the whole piece is called "Zhang Fa". [26] Libian of mature period is more mature in spatial structure, such as upper and lower structure, left and right structure, fully surrounded, Semi-encirclement and other Chinese characters unique symbol combination, and according to the font stroke volume, to deal with its density relationship, showing the center of gravity is stable, space balance artistic conception beauty.

Chinese characters are the product of human labour practices under the rules of society and the laws of nature, and the sense of space embodied in Chinese characters is the beauty of conception beauty that humans perceive in nature. In any form of art, the shape, size, volume and rhythm of the space are all expressive, they can reflect the author's internal emotional and sensory state, It also stimulates a corresponding psychological activity in the mind of the viewer, and calligraphy contains numerous spatial communities of this nature. [27] "A sparse horse can run, a wind cannot blow in intensive" is the projection of the laws of beauty in natural space into the creation of a subordinate space. After satisfying the need for use, Chinese characters gradually developed into a writing art under the pen of the literati. No matter in the writing of a single font or the control of the whole text, all hidden the writer's pursuit of natural artistic conception. In this way, the beauty of Libian in the artificiality of creating a unique artistic world out of the thoughts and feelings that are felt outside and moved by the source of the heart, thus creating a mood.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This essay is a study of the aesthetics of Chinese characters in the process of the “Libian”, basing on Marx's aesthetic theory "labour creates beauty" of "Humanising nature". Through the analysis and comparison of documentary materials, exploring the process of 'Libian' as a product of beauty created by human labour, this process is not an irregular and unconscious process. Rather, it is a creative beautification of Chinese characters by human beings in the scale of the "laws of beauty". The aesthetics of the Chinese characters in the process of Libian is the summation of the beauty of nature in the process of human labour practices. Human beings have taken the 'species scale' of nature as reference standards for the basic copying of Chinese character oracle bone. and human beings develop aesthetic awareness through the satisfaction of their needs in social activities and the practice of nature. Then to adding 'intrinsic scale', resulting in the evolution of the Chinese characters. This evolutionary process continues to demonstrate the transformation of human labour as a subject to create beauty. This evolutionary process continues to demonstrate the transformation of human labour as a subject to create beauty. and as a result, a unique aesthetic culture and aesthetic value belonging to Libian. The value and scope of the study of the aesthetics of Chinese characters is not limited to research values such as the evolution of Chinese characters or script writing techniques. Instead, it should be presented through these external performance to explore the significance of human that are reflected within. For example, humans create Chinese characters and beauty through their labour, or the creative transformation of things by humans following the laws of beauty. In this way, new perspectives on the aesthetics of Chinese characters are expanded for the academic community.

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