

Aesthetic View of Balancing "Form" and "Substance" in "Di Lin"

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Abstract

"Di Lin" is the second chapter of the "Jiaosi Ge" (Songs of Sacrifice to the State) compiled by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. The structure of this work follows the four-character verse tradition of the "Shi Jing", with a rhythm similar to the "Zhou Song", giving it a solemn and slow pace. Its writing style is more akin to the "Chu Ci", with a focus on vivid scene descriptions, similar to the "Jiu Ge". This reflects the aesthetic trends in the creative works of Han scholars. The content of "Di Lin" focuses on the worship of the Yellow Emperor, which differs from the ancestor-worshipping rituals in the "Zhou Song", and instead shares more similarities with the nature-based worship in the "Jiu Ge", reflecting a shift in the Han dynasty's view of gods. The purpose of the sacrifice, from merely seeking blessings, changes to an active affirmation of the current dynasty's good governance and achievements. In literature, "Di Lin" inherits the style and word choice of the "Zhou Song" while borrowing descriptive techniques from the "Jiu Ge", showing a clear aesthetic pursuit of balancing "form" and "substance". This balance is a key characteristic of Chinese traditional aesthetics, especially prominent during the Han dynasty and evident in the development of Chinese literature.

Keywords

Aesthetics, "Form" and "Substance", "Di Lin", "Zhou Song", "Jiu Ge"