

Diffusion of Stone Lion, Shishi, and Koma-Inu in Eurasia and Maritime Asia

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Across Eurasia, placing two statues of lion on either side of a gate as guardians has been a widely practiced custom. Originally, in Egypt and Ancient Middle East, stone lion had been seen since before the Common Era. In China, the east end of Eurasia, lion has never lived. However, the iconography of *shizi* 獅子 (lion) and winged lion – that was called *pixie* 辟邪 or *qilin* 麒麟 – appeared since the Han period. Judging from the fact that before this Scythian and Xiongnu 匈奴 people had the iconography of winged lion, called Griffin in the western Eurasia, lion statues must have been brought from western Eurasia to China via the Eurasian Steppe. In fact, pairs of stone lion were also made in the Göktürks and Uigur Empires. Further, the lion statue was also transmitted to India and incorporated into Buddhism. Such Buddhist iconography of lion was, on the one hand, also transmitted to China via the Eurasian Steppe and on the other hand to Southeast Asia via the maritime route, where it transformed into *makara* (sea monster mixed with crocodile, elephant, and big fish or whale). The *makara* was transmitted to China as *mojie* 摩竭. It is interesting to note that some lion figures and *makara* or *mojie* have some things in common, such as their appearance and posture.

The context of lion's iconographies changed in Mongol-ruled China. Whereas the Buddhist design of lions in China was deformed, the realistic design statues appeared after the Yuan period. There are relatively many records which say that a lion was dedicated as a tribute to the Yuan court. According to Marco Polo, Qubilai Qa'an used to have a hunting session with his lion. Hence, it is considered that the appearance of the realistic lion design in Yuan China reflected the fact that real lions, often dedicated as tributes, existed in China then. At the same time, whereas lion statue was only provided for rulers and temples until then, such statues became popular among urban wealthy people and came to be placed in the front of their residence's gates. Such diffusion of lion statues in Yuan China is believed to be connected with "Pax Mongolica," under which many lions may have been brought to Yuan China from India, Iran, Middle East, and Africa.

Moreover, the custom of lion statue was transmitted from China to Japan in the Tang period and such lions were called *koma-inu* 狛犬. Then, in the Song period, lion statues were again brought to Japan by Buddhist monks especially from the Wuyue 吳越 district. However, it is generally believed that lion statues were not transmitted to Japan in the Yuan period. Is it really like that? This paper reviews the diffusion of lion statue in Maritime Asia during the Mongol period from Eurasian perspective.