【National Treasures in Liaoning】

Elegy Tablets of Liao Dynasty Emperors and Queens

Elegy tablets are inscribed epitaphs recording the life stories and achievements of Liao Dynasty Emperors and Queens. The extant elegy tablets of Liao Dynasty emperors and queens were excavated from Qing Mausoleum of Liao Dynasty, one of the five Liao Dynasty emperors’ mausoleums. There are 15 lids and tablets in total. These national treasures are all conserved at Liaoning Provincial Museum.

Carved out of white marble, the elegy tablets of Liao Dynasty emperors and queens from Qing Mausoleum are square, large, and heavy.

The lid is exquisitely carved with four gods, human figures, dragons and peonies. Both Chinese and Khitan characters are inscribed. Neat, vigorous, and graceful, these inscriptions stand out from Liao Dynasty calligraphy.

The content on these elegy tablets is first-hand material for studying Liao Dynasty history, such as Chanyuan Treaty that kept peace between Liao and Song for over 100 years, the unjust case of shixiangci that rocked the Liao Dynasty to its foundations, and so forth.

The Khitan characters on these elegy tablets are the earliest Khitan small script found in China. These precious characters prove the existence of Khitan script.

Khitan script, including Khitan large script and Khitan small script, was created after the foundation of Khitan Empire. Khitan large script, predating Khitan small script, was complex in strokes and deficient in expression, whereas Khitan small script was expressive, relatively communicative and disseminative.

After Jin annihilated Liao, Khitan script remained in use until new Jurchen script was created and replaced Khitan script, both large and small.

The creation of Khitan script pioneered the creation of written script by ethnic minority groups in ancient Northeast China. It influenced, directly or indirectly, the birth of Jurchen script, Mongolian script, and Manchu script.

Though no one can decipher Khitan script nowadays, it witnessed the development and integration of the Liao Dynasty over centuries.

辽代帝后哀册：揭开契丹文字的神秘面纱

哀册，是记录辽代皇帝与皇后生平事迹的墓志碑刻，目前面世的辽代帝后哀册，来自辽代五大帝陵之一的辽庆陵，册盖与册石共15石，均保存在辽宁省博物馆，皆为国宝级文物。

辽庆陵帝后哀册为汉白玉材质，呈方形，体大而厚重。

册盖线刻精美，刻有四神、人物、龙与牡丹，同时刻汉文、契丹文两种文字，工整遒丽，乃辽代书法的上乘佳作。

辽代帝后哀册所记内容，是研究辽代历史的第一手资料，如辽宋达成百年和平的“澶渊之盟”、撼动辽国根基的“十香词冤案”等。

辽代帝后哀册所刻契丹文字，是中国境内发现最早的契丹小字，首次证实了契丹文的存在，堪称稀世之宝。

契丹文字是契丹建国后陆续创制出的文字，分为大、小字两种，大字早于小字。金灭辽后，前期继续使用契丹文字，直到创制了新的女真文字后，才停用契丹大小字。

契丹文字的诞生，开创了中国东北地区古代少数民族创制文字之先河，以后的女真文字、蒙古文字、满族文字的产生，无不直接或间接地受契丹文字的影响。

契丹文字而今虽成绝学，却印证了辽代的百年发展史与融合史。