

# *History of Shoushan Stone Culture*

## *– Three Kingdoms to North & South Dynasties Period*

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**Abstract:** During the Three Kingdoms period, Sun Wu's influence expanded to central Fujian, leading to the establishment of administrative districts. Northerners sought refuge from the turmoil by migrating south, significantly impacting Fuzhou's development. This influx of people reshaped the city's culture and enriched its Central Plains influence. Over time, Fuzhou's cultural landscape evolved as local culture integrated with Han culture, and the efforts of prefects and scholars further promoted the spread of Han culture. Notably, the discovery of the Shoushan stone pig in Fuzhou during the Southern Dynasties reflects the lasting influence of Central Plains culture on local customs, highlighting the city's artistic heritage. Furthermore, the historical roots of Shoushan stone carvings, originating in the Southern Dynasties, challenge prior beliefs and emphasize the connection between Shoushan stone culture and different historical periods.

**Keywords:** Shoushan stone, art history, stone culture, sculpture, Fuzhou history

## 1. Introduction

Fuzhou, a city situated in the heart of Fujian province, stands as a testament to the enduring tapestry of human civilization. In its annals of history, its pasts are woven with threads of political conquest, population migration, and cultural transformation. As one delves into the intricate layers of Fuzhou's social profile, a story that spans centuries, from the Three Kingdoms period to the Southern and Northern Dynasties era, begins to unravel.

## 2. Social profile

### 2.1. Administrative division

During the Three Kingdoms period, Sun Wu occupied the south of the Yangtze River. In order to bring the remote central Fujian area under his sphere of influence, Sun Wu repeatedly sent his army south and gradually gained political control over the central Fujian area and successively promoted the addition of counties.

In the first year of Jian'an (196 C.E), Sun Wu's army occupied Houguan County (Houguan xian, now Fuzhou), and Sun Ce became Kuaiji prefect, establishing three counties: Hanxing(now Pucheng), Jian'an (now Jianou), and Nanping (now Nanping). In the tenth year of Jian'an, Sun Quan divided

Jianping County (now Jianyang), and the five counties were collectively known as the "Dongye Five Counties."

In the third year of Emperor Jing Yong'an (260 C.E.), Jian'an Prefecture (jun) was established in central Fujian, governing seven counties, including Jian'an, Wuxing, Shaowu, Jiangle, Yanping, Dongping, and Jianyang, all of which are in today's northern Fujian. In the first year of Taikang in the Western Jin Dynasty (280 C.E), Sun Quan's kingdom was conquered, and the Three Kingdoms period came to an end as Jin reunified the land.

To strengthen political control over central Fujian, the imperial court established Jin'an County for supervision. According to the Book of Jin·Geographical Records, "Jin'an County was established in the third year of Taikang, and it comprised eight counties: Yuanfeng, Xinluo, Wanping, Tong'an, Houguan, Luojiang, Jin'an, and Wenma"[1]. Jin'an governed eight counties, encompassing today's Fuzhou, Fuding, Xiapu, Nan'an, Xiamen, Longyan, and other areas.

From the Three Kingdoms and Jin Dynasty to the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the administrative divisions of Fujian gradually increased: from Ye County, the only county established in the Han Dynasty, to fifteen counties in the Jian'an and Jin'an districts. The establishment and promotion of prefectures (jun) and counties (xian), is not only a direct manifestation of military conquest, which facilitates the emperor to strengthen the management and control of central Fujian, but it also promotes the development of economies and ameliorates the societal situation of the time.

For the Fuzhou region, not only did it receive initial development, but its status as a military, administrative, and cultural center also gradually became prominent. During the Three Kingdoms period, Fuzhou, due to its excellent geographical conditions, became an important port and shipbuilding center for the Sun Wu kingdom. In the Western Jin period, the first Prefect of the Jin'an Commandery, Yan Gaojian, relocated the administrative center from Yecheng to a new city named Zicheng. According to The Records of the Three Mountains, it is speculated that the geographical scope of Zicheng roughly extended from Xibushan in the north (around today's Guping Road, Yesan to Wangmu Mountain), to Hujiemen in the south (around the intersection of Bayi Qibei Road and Hujie Road), from Taikangmen in the east (around today's Gu Dong Road, Liwenfang), slightly west to Yixingmen (near Duduji Street, Guxi Road), southeast to Ding'anmen (today's Weiqian Street, Gulou District), and southwest to Qingtaimen (today's Yangqiao Road). The layout of Zicheng continued to exist from the Western Jin Dynasty through the Southern and Northern Dynasties and into the Sui and Tang Dynasties and laid the foundation for Fuzhou as a city.

## 2.2. Population migration

After the downfall of the Minyue Kingdom, the development of the Min region experienced a prolonged period of sluggishness. The presence of abundant mountains and inconvenient transportation resulted in limited immigration. When Yexian was established during the Han Dynasty, its population consisted of less than ten thousand households. It was not until the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty when Sun Quan led the troops of Eastern Wu to conquer the formidable northern mountains that migration groups began to actively move from north to south into Fujian. Through various military activities and expansions, numerous soldiers and generals chose to settle in the Fujian region after the war ended and thus became residents. Consequently, the population in Fujian grew significantly compared to the Han Dynasty period.

In the late Western Jin Dynasty, northern ethnic minorities occupied the Central Plains, and China entered an era of prolonged division and turmoil. The political and social instability, coupled with frequent natural disasters, facilitated population movements between regions. Compared to the frequent wars in the Central Plains, Fuzhou, located in the remote southeastern corner far from conflicts and warfare, was relatively stable. Thus, many northern Han people chose to relocate their

families to Fujian to escape the chaos of war.

During the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties period, there were two large-scale population migrations in the history of Fuzhou. According to the Fuzhou Prefecture Annals, "In the second year of Yongjia of the Jin Dynasty, when the Central Plains were in turmoil, eight clans of scholars and officials migrated to Fujian. These clans were Lin, Huang, Chen, Zheng, Zhan, Qiu, He, and Hu"[2]. This migration of Han people from the northern region to Fujian is known as the "Migration of Scholars and Officials to the South," which marked the first large-scale influx of population from the Central Plains into Fujian and the first major ethnic integration in Chinese history.

Another major population influx into Fujian occurred during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Southern Liang Dynasty in the years 548 and 549. Hou Jing led an armed rebellion which led to widespread massacres and looting that ultimately resulted in fragmentation and decline of the Southern Dynasty. According to the Volume three of the Book of Chen - Records of the Founder, "in March of the sixth year of Tianjia (548), a decree was issued stating Hou Jing and those who had moved to Jian'an, Jin'an, and Yian commanderies due to the turmoil were allowed to return to their homeland. Those who had been taken as slaves and servants were to be freed and become good citizens"[3]. From this decree of Emperor Wen of Chen, it is evident that the chaos of Hou Jing also brought about some migration to Fujian.

Examining the burial practices of this period in Fujian, there were also the brick chamber tombs characteristic of the Han people in addition to the traditional pit burials of the Min people. Among the hundreds of Six Dynasties tombs discovered in Fujian, many inscribed bricks with year markings were unearthed, spanning various dynasties such as Western Jin, Eastern Jin, and Southern Dynasties including the Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen. The wealth of burial data not only attests to the phenomenon of Han people migrating to Fujian during that time but also suggests that some indigenous people in Fuzhou in turn absorbed certain characteristics of Han burial customs.

Hence, population migration played a significant role in the early cultural development of Fuzhou. In fact, the Han ethnic groups' continuous migration to Fuzhou led to a substantial increase in the population and to some extent adjusted the ethnic structure of Fuzhou, with far-reaching effects on the city's social development. Moreover, the Han people from the Central Plains also brought rich Central Plains culture and advanced production techniques to the Fujian region, contributing to the development and progress of the Fuzhou area.

### **3. Cultural landscape**

#### **3.1. Spread of Han Culture**

The cultural origins of Fuzhou can be traced back to the indigenous culture that formed during the Keqiutou period on Pingtan Island and the Tanshishan period in Minhou which possessed unique regional and maritime characteristics. However, traces of influence from Central Plains culture began to emerge during Shang and Zhou dynasties. As it evolved over time, Fuzhou culture continued to absorb elements from Central Plains culture in the Yellow River basin and gradually transitioned into Han culture.

During the Warring States to the Qin and Han periods, Fuzhou's indigenous culture absorbed elements from the Chu and Yue cultures of the Jiangnan region and certain aspects of Central Plains culture gave rise to the distinctive Minyue culture. Even after the fall of the Minyue Kingdom, Minyue culture retained its vitality. Local traditional cultural heritage was preserved for a long time until the period of the Six Dynasties. With a significant influx of people from the north into Fujian, the fusion of the local indigenous population with the Han people facilitated the convergence of regional culture and Central Plains culture, which led to the deepening of the sinicization process. It was then Fujian's local culture entered a new phase: the integration of local and Han culture brought new changes in

population structure, cultural landscape, educational forms, and many other aspects of the Fuzhou region.

Since the establishment of Jin'an Jun(prefecture), many scholars from other regions who came to serve as prefectural governors played a vital role in promoting education and spreading Han culture in Fuzhou. According to the Comprehensive Record of the Eight Min Regions, "Changguo was a barbaric land in the early days, and the people were ignorant of learning. Ruan Mizhi taught farming and opened schools. There were poetry and books in every family, and the marketplace lacked chaos"[4]. Ruan Mizhi, the Prefect of Changguo Jun (i.e., Jin'an Jun) originally from Jiangzuo, established schools, held cultural activities, and ultimately paved the way for the development of culture and education in the Min region during his term.

The History of the Southern Dynasties recorded that Yu Yuan, a native of Yuyao in Kuaiji and appointed as the Prefect of Jinping Jun, not only wrote the Record of Kuaiji and numerous literary works but also established county schools and taught knowledge. Later, (he corresponded with Wang Xiu, the Prince of Langye, and praised the governance of his county, saying,)his successor Wang Xiuzhi praised the county under Yu Yuan's rule, "This county has inherited the legacy of Lord Yu, good governance still prevails, and the old customs are easy to follow"[5]. This demonstrates the significant impact of Yu Yuan's governance on the county.

Thus, the jun officials' dedication to the establishment of schools and the spread of education, to some extent, expanded the influence of Central Plains culture and initiated the process of cultural integration. There were also literati and scholars who made cultural contributions, such as Tao Kui, the Prefect of Jin'an, who compiled Records of Minzhong, the earliest local gazetteer (chronicle) of Fujian. Furthermore, prefects of Jin'an like Wang Deyuan and Xu Song were skilled in poetry and literature and further promoted the prosperity of Fuzhou's indigenous culture.

In conclusion, the non-local cultures brought by migrants have gradually influenced and reshaped various aspects of ancient Minzhong society. The cultural integration not only dissolves the cultural boundaries between different ethnic groups but also gradually enhances the Minyue people's sense of identity with Central Plains Han culture. During this period, the exchange, collision, and fusion of different cultures drove progress in the entire Minzhong society. Various aspects of social life, including culture, art, beliefs, and customs, exhibited diverse characteristics in terms of both content and expression.

### **3.2. Shoushan Stone Pigs of the Southern Dynasties**

In the 1950s and 1960s, several tombs dating back to the Southern Dynasties period were discovered in the Fuzhou region. Within these tombs, several stone sculptures in the form of pigs made from Laoling stone were unearthed. These artifacts are not only the earliest Shoushan stone carvings found to date but are also a meaningful historical snapshot of the transition from Minyue culture to Han culture within the broader historical development of Fuzhou's culture.

#### **3.2.1. The Artistic Features of Stone Pigs**

In 1954, during the construction of Fujian Normal College (now Fujian Normal University) on Taohua Mountain in Cangshan District, Fuzhou, a pair of stone pigs were unearthed from a Southern Dynasties tomb. Each pig measured 1.1 centimeters in height and 6.4 centimeters in length. The stone was shaped like a rectangular pillar, with the head of the pig carved in great detail. The pig's nose was long and round and had a natural curvature; the pig's ears were short and small; the eyes were highlighted with dotted knife marks. As for the carving of the body, only a few clean and simple strokes outlined the pig's limbs and vivid movements.

In the same year, another pair of stone pigs were discovered in a Southern Dynasties tomb at the

construction site of Lequn Road Speed-Up Middle School in Cangshan, Fuzhou. These stone pigs measured 2 centimeters in height and 6 centimeters in length and featured a realistic style: the stone pigs had short, round snouts that were slightly upturned, clearly visible nostrils, triangular-shaped raised ears, and multi-layered circular carved eyes. The front legs of the pigs were close together and stretched forward, while the hind legs were supporting the ground in a lying position. These stone pigs were small and exquisite, with delicately carved lines all over their bodies. The contours of muscles contracting created a sense of pent-up energy, making the carvings appear lifelike.

In 1965, a Southern Dynasties tomb at the Erfeng Mountain construction site in the northern suburbs of Fuzhou also unearthed a pair of stone pigs. Alongside these stone pigs, a dated brick inscribed with "Yuanjia 22nd Year, Yiyu (445)" was discovered, providing a clear indication of the specific dating of the stone pigs. These stone pigs were measured 0.7 centimeters in height and 1 centimeter in width. Despite the existence of certain damages the slender and pillar-like overall shape is still identifiable. One end of the stone was slanted, and the corners were slightly smoothed which represented the pig's mouth. The deepest carvings were for the two ears attached to the head that were slightly raised. The body omitted the limbs and has decorative lines carved on the back. Overall, the shape of these stone pigs was abstract, indistinct, and simple in form.

Upon examination, it was determined that all three groups of Southern Dynasties stone pigs were made from Shoushan Laoling stone, which is known for its tough texture, slight luster, and pure color. In terms of design, the stone pigs unearthed all depicted a lying posture and appeared gentle and docile. Yet their designs varied, mainly falling into two categories: abstract and realistic. The abstract types were long and pillar-shaped, with both ends cut off, and used simple lines to depict features such as eyes, nose, and limbs, often simplifying or even omitting some body parts. The realistic types featured refined and clear volume and surface details, giving them a vibrant lifelike appearance.

In terms of carving techniques, whether abstract or realistic, these stone pigs did not undergo excessive detail refinement, nor were they polished to a high gloss. They could be formed with minimal carving and had concise and highly representative techniques. The carving techniques included intaglio, relief, and round carving.

When examining pig-shaped artifacts found across the country from the Han Dynasty to the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, various degrees of aesthetic detail can be observed. These range from simplified Han Eight Knife-style carvings to symbolic pillar-shaped, as well as highly realistic pig forms. The stark differences in carving styles of Southern Dynasties stone pigs in Fuzhou reflect the diversity of artistic expressions during the evolution of aesthetics.

### 3.2.2. The Cultural Origins of Stone Pigs

Throughout Chinese history, people have attached great importance to elaborate burials, treating matters of life and death with equal significance. The use of jade and stone with different shapes and meanings has been specifically employed in funerary rituals, with "wo", or grip, being one of the forms of expression. The shape and cultural significance behind the Southern Dynasties Shoushan stone pigs in Fuzhou can be traced back to this tradition of "wo".

In the "Shi Ming" section of the ancient Chinese text *System of Mourning Rituals and Burial Customs*, it is mentioned: "wo, to place an item in the deceased's hand for them to hold"[6]. "Wo" refers to the object held in the hand of the deceased. "Wo" did not have a standardized form during the pre-Qin period. The practice of placing items held by the deceased can be traced back to the Neolithic period when objects like bone ornaments and deer antlers were placed in the hands of the deceased in primitive burials. From the Western Zhou period to the Warring States period, jade, as a material, began to symbolize eternal life and people's pursuit of reborn after death. Different forms of jade "wo," such as jade pendants, knives, and tubes, emerged. Starting from the mid to late Western Han Dynasty, jade "wo" gradually took on the form of a reclining pig, usually appearing in pairs.



In ancient times, the pig belonged to private property and thus represented wealth and power. Crafting a pig-shaped object to be held in the hands of the deceased was a hope that one could continue to enjoy a prosperous life even in the afterlife. Besides the jade pig “wo”, another item related to the ancient concept of life and death was the jade cicada placed in the mouth of the deceased. In the eyes of the ancients, cicadas only drank dew and could shed their exoskeletons to grow, symbolizing rebirth and transcendence. Thus, these various forms of burial jade reflected the ancient people's contemplation of transcending life and death, entrusting both worldly pleasures and eternal life to these small pieces of burial jade.

During the Eastern Han and Western Han Dynasties, the trend of using burial jade became popular and the forms of burial jade became more standardized. These burial jades, including forms of jade stoppers, cicadas, pigs, and clothing, were often found in the tombs of nobles. In fact, jade was a rare natural resource and constantly short in supply which limited the scope it could be used in daily life. Therefore, people often used other materials like soapstone, marble, granite, and other more ubiquitous materials to craft burial items. Soapstone, in particular, was soft and smooth, resembling jade in texture, and had a long tradition of use in history. Moreover, soapstone was more affordable, making it suitable for the common people. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, it was very common to see soapstone artifacts and was unearthed in many regions throughout the country. Stone pigs made from soapstone are commonly referred to as “hua shi zhu” by modern archaeologists.

Since the Wei and Jin periods, large Han populations began to migrate southward and the center of Han culture shifted from the north to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. Traditional burial customs that were popular in the Central Plains began to spread and became widely adopted in southern societies. In regions such as Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hunan, Zhejiang, Guangdong, and Guangxi, soapstone pigs were commonly unearthed, and the same was true for the Fujian region, where the Southern Dynasties stone pigs from Fuzhou were found. However, the material used was not jade or soapstone but rather Shoushan stone, which is native to Fujian.

The Southern Dynasties Shoushan stone pigs unearthed in Fuzhou reflect a historical fact: during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, when Central Plain's civilization advanced and Han culture further permeated Fujian, changes occurred in the beliefs, customs, culture, and art of the people in Fujian. Although the number of these stone pigs is not large, they reveal traces of the influence of Central Plains culture on local Fujian culture. Fundamentally, the Laoling stone pigs are not only the oldest artistic artifacts in Shoushan stone carving but also a typical symbol of Central Plains culture. On another note, they also reveal that Shoushan stone culture is not unique to a certain region but has rather been closely connected to mainstream Han culture from its inception.

### 3.3. The Beginnings of Shoushan Stone Carving History

Exploring the historical origins of Shoushan stone carving has been a lengthy process due to the lack of sufficient archaeological data. Consequently, there have been various interpretations within the academic community regarding the historical roots of Shoushan stone carving.

In the past, there was a folk belief that Shoushan stone carving began during the Two Han Dynasties. However, there is no concrete evidence to support this claim. Later, another theory emerged which believed that Shoushan stone carving was invented during the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. Huang Binhong, in his work *Introduction to Ancient Seals*, suggested, “Shoushan stone carving was invented between the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. Initially, a temple monk noticed multicolored stones with a crystalline quality similar to jade. They were carved into Buddhist prayer beads and became popular among travelers for their suitability for engraving”[7].

In contemporary times, archaeological discoveries in the Fuzhou region have been continually revising the scholarly understanding of the Shoushan stone carving's history.

The significant number of Shoushan stone figurines from the Song Dynasty challenges the theory of Yuan and Ming origination and supports the prevailing idea in academia that Shoushan stone carving originated during the Five Dynasties and the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties. It also confirms the reliability of accounts related to the Shoushan stone in The Records of the Three Mountains.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Shoushan stone burial objects excavated from ancient tombs in the Fuzhou region once again overturned previous judgments. This compelled the academic community to reevaluate the historical origins of Shoushan stone carving, ultimately establishing new coordinates for Shoushan stone's history.

As early as 1966, scholar Pan Zhulan first proposed the archaeological discovery of Shoushan stone pigs from the Southern Dynasties in his work "Historical Stories of Shoushan Stone Carvings". This discovery pushes the history of Shoushan stone carving back to the Southern Dynasties period, approximately 1,500 years ago. At the beginning of his work, he wrote, "The Shoushan stone carvings in Fuzhou already had the creation of animals during the Southern Dynasties era"[8]. In terms of creative themes, these Southern Dynasties Shoushan stone pigs represent not only the oldest Shoushan stone carvings found to date but also the earliest form of Shoushan stone animal sculptures.

However, it cannot be definitively concluded whether the mining history of Shoushan stone and large-scale carving activities began at the same time. There is currently no historical evidence to confirm the existence of Shoushan stone mining during that era. Moreover, since only a few Shoushan stone pigs have been found, it is not possible to speculate that large-scale carving was occurring at the time. Looking at the geographical distribution of the stone material, the rich resources of Laoling stone mines, its wide distribution, and the presence of exposed layers in several locations made it possible that these few stone pigs were carved by people who happened to find Shoushan stone fragments and decided to carve them. Indeed, the use of Shoushan stone for carving stone pigs itself has a certain degree of contingency. Nevertheless, Shoushan stone as an artistic carving material has been broadly discovered and recognized. The simple and unsophisticated carving lines reflected the ancient people's imagination and interpretation of life and death.

Whether it is the Shoushan stone pigs from the Southern and Northern Dynasties period or Shoushan stone tools from over 5,000 years ago in the Neolithic era, all deeply reflect the lives and beliefs of ancient people in the different eras of history. In the long history of Shoushan stone culture, the use of the first Shoushan stone tool, the appearance of the first Shoushan stone carving, and the subsequent formation and evolution of Shoushan stone carving art are closely related to their respective historical periods. They profoundly reflect the distinct characteristics of those times and represent a collective embodiment of cultural concepts and aesthetic consciousness.

#### 4. Conclusion

The social profile, population migration, and cultural landscape of Fuzhou across various historical periods reveal a dynamic and intricate tapestry of development. From the Three Kingdoms period to the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Fuzhou's administrative divisions expanded in response to political changes, while population migration played a pivotal role in shaping the city's demographic and cultural characteristics. As both local and northern ethnic groups settled in Fuzhou, the subsequent introduction of Han culture from the Central Plains facilitated the fusion of regional traditions with those from the Central Plains. This cultural exchange was promoted by officials, scholars, and educational institutions dedicated to learning and the exchange of ideas. The discovery of Southern Dynasties Shoushan stone pigs underscores the deep historical roots of Fuzhou's artistic heritage, shedding light on its evolving cultural and artistic expressions over time. These multifaceted developments exemplify the rich and diverse history of Fuzhou, where social, demographic, and cultural influences converged, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to shape the city's identity.

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