The Emergence and Development of Mechanical Duplication Technique in the Casting of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions

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In the casting process of Shang and Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, even though there was a considerable need to produce a set of vessels bearing the same inscription, there was actually no use of any mechanical duplication technique such as mold stamping, the inscriptions for each vessel was copied one by one, independently. However, by the Eastern Zhou period, this situation changes dramatically. The methods of mechanical duplication such as “single character stamping” 單字模, “compound character stamping” 複字模 and “compete inscriptions stamping” 全銘模 gradually emerged and developed among the casting and duplication techniques of the bronze inscriptions. Through the detailed observation on the several representative samples of casted bronze inscriptions from the pre-Qin period, this research examines when and how the mechanical duplication techniques were applied to the casting process of bronze inscriptions.

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