

Iconographic Analysis of Decorative Patterns of Hanging Fish in Traditional Chinese Architecture: A Case Study of the Ancient City of Pingyao in Shanxi Province

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Abstract:

As a decorative pattern with national characteristics in traditional Chinese architecture, the hanging fish decoration pattern has a rich cultural connotation. This paper interprets the hanging fish pattern in Pingyao, Shanxi Province from three different levels by using the research method of Panofsky image theory, and expounds the pattern reflecting the social situation at that time through different levels of analysis, and is of great significance for further understanding and exploring the unique national culture of the local area.

Keywords:

Hanging Fish Decorative Pattern, Iconography, Pingyao Ancient City, Parse

1. Introduction

Hanging fish first originated in the Tang Dynasty, Tang Dynasty painter Li Sixun's "Jiangfan Pavilion Map", which is painted with hanging fish. [1] The existence of hanging fish was first discovered in Shanxi and Central Plains, and later gradually developed in the south and southwest directions. Hanging fish decoration is not common in traditional buildings in northern China, and Shanxi region is the main distribution area of traditional hanging fish architectural decoration. The hanging fish pattern in Shanxi is mostly used in temples, ancestral halls and residential buildings, especially in the ancient city of Pingyao, there are many kinds of hanging fish decoration. Pingyao's hanging fish pattern not only reflects the local folk characteristics, but also reflects the thinking of the people at that time. By consulting the existing literature and materials, combined with the use of imaging analysis methods to explore the decorative characteristics of the hanging fish pattern. Iconography was first proposed by Warburg, and later Panofsky continued to develop iconography under the influence of Warburg, and gradually matured into a research method of art history. It is a research method that analyzes the content as the main line and then explains the symbolic connotation of the artwork according to the background of traditional historical knowledge, with the purpose of understanding the

cultural information conveyed by the artwork that we cannot see, while promoting the connection between various disciplines. In this paper, the hanging fish pattern in Pingyao is analyzed at different levels according to three levels in the imagery methodology.

2. A Pre-Image Analysis of The Decorative Pattern of Hanging Fish In the Ancient City of Pingyao

The first level of pre-iconographic analysis is that the image is described or depicted with the subject matter of nature. By analyzing the modeling form, color analysis and engraving process of the decorative pattern of the hanging fish, the specific structural methods and arrangement rules are explored. [2,3]

2.1. Styling structure

Hanging fish is a building component suspended under the hanging mountain type and the mountain roof Bo wind panel. It is hanging on the ridge, because most of the ancient Chinese architecture is mainly wooden structure, so most of the hanging fish is carved from wooden boards, in Pingyao hanging fish in addition to wood carvings as well as brick carvings and glass. The hanging fish was first made of fish shapes and cloud patterns, both of which symbolize water and symbolize fire. [4] Hanging fish pays attention to the use of lines in terms of modeling, and while paying attention to the traditional modeling method of lines, it also affects the modeling style of hanging fish. The use of three methods of line carving, painting and plastic can create a variety of line expression methods, so that the expressiveness of the line can be fully exerted. Secondly, there are also many forms in the structural organization of the line, mostly using tight parallel lines, arranged in an orderly manner, a large number of repetitions and other forms, while rhythmically beautiful, reflecting a sense of order. The structure of the hanging fish is roughly summarized into the following three categories:

Symmetrical structure

In the core principles of Chinese architecture, symmetry is very important. Simply drawing one is the most basic law representing the beauty of Chinese form. For example, fish-shaped patterns are one of the most common in daily life, usually in the festival they always appear in the form of a pair, whether it is a paper-cut pattern, or a painting pattern, will appear in pairs, and imply good happiness, increase the meaning of joy. The hanging fish pattern is no exception, it maintains the independence of each component in the whole, and grasps the whole in the unique, while producing unique characteristics in different cultural backgrounds, the complex structure of the sublimation form is easy to make people visually and psychologically acceptable. But Shanxi brick carved fish is generally asymmetrical, but the visual experience is vivid and beautiful. The symmetrical equilibrium structure reflects self-centered feelings. On the one hand, it is to satisfy the vision, on the other hand, the psychological pursuit of human beings is a sense of security.

Proportional dimensions

In Li Jie's "Building the French Style", the size of the hanging fish is recorded, "The hanging fish is three feet long to one zhang, and its breadth and thickness are taken from the long product of each foot. Hanging fish plates, each one foot long, are six inches wide and two minutes and five centimeters thick." From the literature, we

know that the hanging fish with a unique proportion has an unusual harmonious beauty. In China's grasp of size is exquisite, the appropriate proportion can bring people the harmony of the soul and the enjoyment of beauty, the size of the hanging fish not only caters to people's visual feelings, but also in line with the scale of the formal beauty law.

Feel the mood

Association is an extension of thinking, and more emphasis is placed on the beautiful meaning of form. For example, the hanging fish in the simplest "fish" shape of the decoration, through the technique of carving, so that the fish is associated with the fish in the water, the fish in the water is associated with its meaning, expressing wealth and good luck. Meaning. In addition, it is like a "Tai Chi Bagua Pattern" Tai Chi diagram expressing forms of mutual transformation and relative unity. Because Taoism uses Tai Chi Bagua, it is believed that it can shock evil, and the use of Tai Chi motifs on the decorative parts of hanging fish may be due to its intent.

2.2. Color analysis

The hanging fish motif in Shanxi has gorgeous carvings, is large, using wood, brick walls and glass, and is mostly found in temples and other buildings. From the color analysis of the hanging fish, it integrates the local regional culture, ethnic culture, religious culture and so on. The colors of hanging fish are generally log color, brick gray and the unique color of glass. This is because Shanxi is the main production area of glass in China and has the reputation of "the hometown of glass art". Therefore, the figure of Liu Li can be seen everywhere in the ancient buildings of Shanxi. Pingyao's ancient buildings are unique, the gray brick wall wooden structure, in the quaint elegance, and the color of the hanging fish pattern complement each other, together reflecting the influence of court culture, northern architectural style and regional culture. [5]

2.3. Engraving process

The hanging fish decoration of Pingyao Ancient City is mainly in the form of wood carving, brick carving and glass in the process of production. From the analysis of wood carving, the most common wood carving materials in traditional Chinese architecture are mainly hardwood or wood slightly soft wood. The decoration of the hanging fish components in the ancient city belongs to the "small wood carving" in wood carving, and its carving method is mainly based on relief. The most typical is the hanging fish pattern of the county Ya Qinmin Hall in the ancient city of Pingyao (Figure 1). The brick carving process is widely used in traditional ancient buildings. The bricks used in brick carving are mostly selected without gravel, and after special treatment, add water to stir into a paste, and then precipitate, filter, and grind to make its texture delicate and pure, soft and hard, consistent color, less sand hole, crisp percussion sound, no cracking sound, in order to be used for carving. However, in Pingyao City, the brick carving hanging fish only appears in the gables of Lei Lutai's former residence and Rishengchang's ancestral property, using the technique of bas-relief, the carving is meticulous and exquisite, the meaning is profound, and it is a must. Among them, the hanging fish pattern of Lei Lutai's former residence, the carving pattern are all decorated with Tang grass pattern as a decorative element, and the center is carved with a lion. The hanging fish of the ancestral industry of Rishengchang uses bas-relief carving to carve four dragons around the word "sun" held up by waves, surrounded by clouds. (Figure 2) The most distinctive hanging fish

made of glass in the ancient city of Pingyao is in the City God Temple. The hanging fish, the Bo wind plate and the entire roof are made of glass, and due to the excessive volume, the overall shape is spliced with small components. (Figure 3)



Figure 1. The hanging fish pattern of the county Ya Qinmin Hall in the ancient city of Pingyao.



Figure 2. The hanging fish in the City God Temple.



Figure 3. The Bo wind plate and the entire roof are made of glass.

Source: Image from the web

3. Image History Analysis of Decorative Patterns of Hanging Fish

The second level of iconography analysis means that its object is to connect the background and its source related to the concept of the theme, and explore the story and meaning behind the image, etc. This paper interprets it from the perspective of the historical background and pattern type of the hanging fish pattern.[6,7]

3.1. About the history of the hanging fish pattern

Regarding the historical background of the hanging fish, there are two types of theories: one is that there are physical objects first, because their shape is mostly fish-shaped and suspended under the Bofeng plate, and named after the shape: the second is the historical allusion of “sheep continuing to hang fish” or the concept of the Five Elements Philosophy, and then the hanging fish appears. The Book of the Later Han Dynasty - The Continuation of the Sheep is published." The government tasted and offered its raw fish, and continued to receive and hung in the court: after the beggar entered it, it continued to be the one who was suspended before to do so. This allusion is to say that in the Han Dynasty, when Yang Xu was too punctual in Nanyang, there was a beggar who sent a fish to bribe him, so he hung the fish, and when the chancellor sent it again, he took the fish out to educate him, so as to refuse the bribe. Later, the word “hanging fish” became synonymous with the honesty of officials, hanging hanging fish on the eaves to show incorruptibility.

3.2. Interpretation of several patterns of hanging fish

The decorative patterns of hanging fish are very diverse, and the earliest decorative patterns of hanging fish are fish patterns and cloud patterns. In the ancient city of Pingyao, the city hall building, the Shuanglin Temple, the City God Temple Stage, and the County Ya Qinmin Hall are decorated with hanging fish, most of which use cirrus cloud patterns, flower basket patterns, and fine carving plant patterns, animal patterns, etc. Among them, the longest hanging fish decoration in the ancient city is the cloud pattern, which has both a more specific form and an abstract geometric deformation style. In addition, there are also tang grass patterns and peach ornaments

that are also the most common ornaments for hanging fish decoration in the ancient city of Pingyao. Peaches in ancient China are generally shaped like shou peaches, which represent the meaning of auspicious longevity. The decorative pattern of Tang grass is based on lotus, orchid, peony and other flowers and grasses as the prototype, after deformation in a curved arrangement, this ornamental shape changes complexly, the composition is diverse, the whole is regular to extend around, the stems and leaves of the plant are rhythmically curled to form a whirlpool, the size distribution is natural, stretching and smooth. This kind of ornamentation was originally a single flower and grass, and then combined with the auspicious images of birds and beasts, dragons, and phoenix tails, with a novel shape and full of national characteristics. The geometric ornaments decorated with hanging fish in the ancient city of Pingyao are mostly simplified from the images of realistic and concrete things, and contain the spiritual pursuit of people to pray for good fortune and pray for the protection of the gods. The image is characterized by simplicity and regularity, and at the same time has a prominent abstract meaning.

4. Iconographic Interpretation of Decorative Patterns of Hanging Fish

From the way of iconographic interpretation to analyze the third level of meaning, dig deep into the inner meaning of the symbol of the hanging fish pattern, which is closely related to the historical background of people's lives in a certain period of time, reflecting the essential meaning of the image. Owen Panofsky has always sought to place concrete works of art in the latent relation of the human condition, in the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity, "to grasp the inner meaning or content of the work, it is necessary to affirm certain principles that reveal the basic attitudes of a people, an era, a stage, a religion, and a philosophical doctrine that are unconsciously condensed in a work of art". [8,9] The hanging fish pattern essentially reflects the traditional cultural customs of people in Shanxi, the religious beliefs of gods and Buddhas, and the ethnic culture of the region.

4.1. The meaning of traditional auspicious culture

There are many beautiful interpretations of fish in traditional Chinese culture. In folk culture, the fish symbolizes love and reproduction, and in the primitive society period is a symbol of prosperity, the ancients greatly admired the reproductive ability of the fish, as a totem. Later, there was the legend of "carp leaping dragon gate", which compared fish and dragons, and there are sayings of "dragon fish" and "fish dragon". During the Tang Dynasty, because of the harmonic pronunciation of the "carp" character of the carp and the "Li" surname of the king, it was revered as a national fish, which became a symbol of power and identity, and there were fish charms and carp pei that only officials above the five pins could wear. In addition, the fish is an animal that lives in the water, and it also symbolizes the water. Therefore, from the name and pattern of the hanging fish alone, it contains the above cultural meanings. The explanation for "cloud" in the book "Shuowen Jiezi" is "Yamakawa Kiya." The cloud pattern usually symbolizes precipitation, which is in line with the symbolism of fire prevention in hanging fish. After the Song Dynasty, with the development of society and the continuous change of aesthetics, more and more decorative patterns appeared in hanging fish, such as lotus, vase flowers, bats, dragons, tai chi gossip and other patterns. At this time, the decorative pattern of the hanging fish is no longer simply for fire prevention, but also represents the auspicious meaning

of Fulu Shouxi, Mianmian Descendants, and Four Seasons of Peace. [5] Some scholars believe that China's cultural characteristics are to a considerable extent under the influence of this secularization, that is, the "auspicious culture" that pleasing people spiritually, which attaches importance to the comfort of the soul and the blessings of life. The fish was a fertility cult in prehistory, and later transformed into a symbol of wealth and joy, and the hanging fish is a representative artistic symbol that has been born under the influence of auspicious culture.

4.2. Regional and national memories

The Sanjin area has a long history and culture, which is formed by the integration of merchant culture, drama culture, religious culture, ethnic culture and other cultures. Sanjin architecture is represented by temple architecture and Jin merchant residences, and the development of Sanjin architecture hanging fish and architectural form system matches its form from figurative to abstract fusion of cultural elements in the form of intentionality, etc. These patterns use imitation, metaphor, association in the way of light, color, texture, pattern and other decorative means to be put into practice. In the ancient city of Pingyao, the geometric ornaments decorated with hanging fish are mostly simplified from the image of realistic and specific things, which contain the spiritual pursuit of people to pray for good fortune and pray for the protection of the gods. Its image is characterized by simplicity and regularity, and at the same time has a prominent abstract meaning. The hanging fish not only has local characteristics, but also symbolizes the culture of one side and the water and soil of the other side. It reflects the characteristics of humanistic thought in a region at that time, the living conditions and the development process of society at that time. [10] Therefore, until now, the hanging fish pattern still maintains its own characteristics, rich themes, exquisite carving technology, these are the most precious cultural symbols of a region. It contains faith and pursuit, shows the spiritual outlook of the entire Sanjin region, and is a permanent memory of a region.

5. Conclusions

In this era of rapid development of science and technology, first of all, we must have a more comprehensive understanding of the pattern pattern with ancient culture like the hanging fish, and carefully analyze its modeling structure, color and process, such as multi-layer and regular structural modeling, the principle of matching with architectural color, and the exquisite and complex carving techniques all show its distinctive characteristics. Secondly, it is necessary to explore the background of the origin of the hanging fish pattern, its source is closely related to the customs and culture of the time, and a variety of pattern themes are related to the development of local society and folk customs, and the way of seeing and hearing patterns is transformed into artistic language. Finally, it is necessary to combine various factors such as the historical and cultural forms of the Sanjin region to deeply analyze the traditional cultural customs of the local people, the religious beliefs of gods and Buddhas, and the national culture of the region. It shows people's reverence for nature and the tradition of ancestor worship, and highlights the cultural visual symbols that distinguish the culture of the Sanjin region from other regions. With the development of society, the hanging fish has always recorded the social development and changes of the Three Jins, is a witness to historical evolution, and it is necessary to strengthen the awareness of cultural protection, inheritance and development, so that it is full of new vitality and vitality.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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