

Design Expression of Mongolian Silver Bowl

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Abstract:

In addition to an important part of Mongolian gold and silver ware, Mongolian silver bowl is the accumulation of Mongolian history and culture, customary beliefs and emotional concepts. The production skills of Mongolian silver bowl, which has a long history and culture, inherit those of the traditional gold and silver left by their ancestors, and the design expression is very rich. Focusing on the design expression of Mongolian silver bowls, this paper studies the types of Mongolian silver bowl and decorative patterns.

Keywords:

Mongolian Silver Bowl, Design Expression of Mongolian Silver Bowl

1. Introduction

The northern grassland, with its vast area and rich natural resources, has always been a historical stage for nomadic people to be active and gallop. At the beginning of the 13th century, after the Mongol tribes led by Genghis Khan united all the ministries in the Mongolian region, they gradually formed a new ethnic community, the Mongols. [1] Mongolian gold and silver ware is a continuation period of the northern steppe gold and silverware, [2] which has been developed to the present day. Mongolian silver bowl has improved the diversified aesthetic concepts of the nation in the process of continuous integration of other cultures, and has created a unique form of artifacts with their own characteristics.

2. Types of Mongolian Silver Bowl

Rich in style, Mongolian silver bowl has not been classified and organized by anyone at present. The paper is organized and summarized by the author according to the collected picture data and divided into the following 5 types according to the more prominent styles.

2.1. Types by Material

Mongolian silver bowl can be divided into sterling silver bowl, wooden silver bowl and porcelain silver bowl according to the material. As shown in Figure 1, on the left

is a sterling silver bowl with sterling silver inside and out and no wood, and botanical patterns are engraved inside and outside of the bowl, all in blue. In the middle is a wooden silver bowl with eight-treasure patterns, rectangular spirals and lotus petal patterns engraved on the bowl holder. On the right is a porcelain silver bowl, with a bowl holder engraved with lotus petal patterns, circle bowl patterns, and dragon patterns painted on the arc belly; the holder of the other bowl is engraved with Hamur patterns and phoenix patterns, and the curved belly is painted with phoenix patterns. However, porcelain bowls and porcelain plates are only available after the construction of a fixed residence, and the reason why the author introduces it here is that when the porcelain bowl is wrapped with silver pieces and engraved with traditional Mongolian patterns, it becomes the Mongolian silver bowl, but the author mainly studies the traditional Mongolian silver bowl in the paper. At first, the folk silver bowl was mainly a wooden silver bowl, so this paper mainly studies the traditional Mongolian wooden silver bowl. In this case, only the wooden silver bowl participates in the next classification.



Figure 1. Sterling Silver Bowl, Wooden Silver Bowl and Porcelain Silver Bowl.

Note: Picture source: left and middle pictures are taken by the author; right picture is from the book Mongolian Arts and Crafts

2.2. Types by Shapes

Mongolian silver bowl can be divided into all-wrapped silver bowl and half-wrapped silver bowl according to their shapes. As shown in Figure 2, an all-wrapped silver bowl is a wooden bowl that is tightly wrapped all the way around with silver pieces, creating an all-silver-wrapped silver jewelry shape. The left picture is an all-wrapped silver bowl with a plain and smooth inner wall, and a skimming mouth; the outer wall is engraved with decorative patterns, including eight-treasure patterns, back patterns and plant patterns; curved belly and ringfoot. The half-wrapped silver bowl is to wrap the inner wall and the lower part of the outer wall of the wooden bowl with silver pieces without wrapping the outer wall and belly to expose the inherent color and texture of the wooden bowl. The right picture is a fully-wrapped silver bowl with a plain and smooth inner wall, and a skimming mouth; the bowl holder is engraved with decorative patterns, including lotus petal patterns and rectangular spirals; curved belly and ringfoot. This style of silver bowl is the most common type of silver bowl in Inner Mongolia.



Figure 2. All-wrapped Silver Bowl and Half-wrapped Silver Bowl.

Note: Picture source: taken by the author

2.3. Types by Depth of Belly

Mongolian silver bowl can be divided into deep belly silver bowl and shallow belly silver bowl according to the depth of the belly. As shown in Figure 3, the inner wall of the deep belly silver bowl is plain, smooth, and skimmed; the bowl holder is engraved with decorative patterns, including rectangular spirals and lotus petal patterns; curved belly and ringfoot. The inner wall of the shallow belly silver bowl is plain, smooth, and skimmed; the edge of the bowl holder is engraved with lotus petal pattern.



Figure 3. Deep Belly Silver Bowl and Shallow Belly Silver Bowl.

Note: Picture source: from Master of Hugjilt Picture

2.4. Types by Decoration Process

Mongolian silver bowl can be divided into engraving craft silver bowls, hollow craft silver bowls, cloisonne craft silver bowls, and inlay craft silver bowls according to the decoration process. As shown in Figure 4, the inner wall of the silver bowl with engraved process is plain, smooth, and skimmed; the bowl holder is engraved with decorative patterns, including dragon patterns, auspicious cloud patterns, and plant patterns; curved belly and ringfoot. The inner wall of the hollow craft silver bowl is plain, smooth, and skimmed; the bowl holder is engraved with curly grass patterns, circle bowl patterns, and Hamur patterns; curved belly and ringfoot. The cloisonne craft silver bowl is all-wrapped silver bowl, and there is no seal at the bottom of the wrist and foot; there are cloisonne ribbon patterns and floral patterns at the bowl holder, and the ribbon patterns are colored with cloisonne glaze, with three colors: blue, green and yellow. Gems are also inlaid between each group of ribbon patterns, with curved belly and ringfoot, with overall color coordination. The inner wall of the inlay silver bowl is plain, smooth, and skimmed; the bowl holder is engraved with decorative patterns, including dragon patterns, rectangular spirals, Hamur patterns, flower patterns and bat patterns; the Hamur pattern on the wrists and feet is painted with a blue glaze; curved belly and ringfoot. Ruby is inlaid in the interval between each bat pattern.



Figure 4. Engraving Craft Silver Bowl, Hollow Craft Silver Bowl, Cloisonne Craft Silver Bowl and Inlay Craft Silver Bowl.

Note: Picture source: Bazihu Cultural Inheritance Official Account Platform

2.5. Types by Decorative Patterns

The decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls are basically in the form of combinations, and they all have auspicious meanings. The author divides the silver bowl specifically into a dragon pattern silver bowl, an eight-treasure silver bowl, a bat

pattern silver bowl, a plant pattern silver bowl and other pattern silver bowls according to the most prominent decorative patterns, as shown in Figure 5 (due to the large number of pictures of silver bowls of various pattern types, they will not be shown here).

For silver bowl with dragon pattern, the dragon pattern has a variety of shapes, a moment of clouds and fog, a moment of overturning the river, some opening their mouths wide, some opening their eyes, some with front face and some with side face. For silver bowl with eight-treasure pattern, the eight-treasure pattern refers to the circle bowl pattern, goldfish pattern, treasure umbrella pattern, lotus pattern, threaded flange pattern, and Huagai pattern, with each of the eight-treasure patterns separated by an equal distance from each other. For bat pattern silver bowl, the five bat patterns are separated by equal distances and encircled in a circle, often combined with the circular pattern and the dragon pattern. For plant pattern silver bowl, most of the plant patterns are dense and intertwined forms, and there are also many more concise plant patterns. In addition to the decorative patterns described above, there are many other patterns of silver bowls. The decorative patterns of the Mongolian silver bowl are rich and colorful, and they are all auspicious patterns.



Figure 5. Silver Bowl with Dragon Pattern, Eight-treasure Pattern Silver Bowl, Bat Pattern Silver Bowl and Plant Pattern Silver Bowl.

Note: Picture source: The dragon pattern silver bowl and the eight-treasure pattern silver bowl were taken by the author, and the bat pattern silver bowl and the plant pattern silver bowl were provided by Master of Hugejiltu Picture

3. Decorative Patterns of Mongolian Silver Bowl

The decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls come from their daily life, and are the content of praise, enrichment and beautification of life. They take objects that decorate everyday life, beautify them, engrave them, weave them, or paint them in a style that people like, and decorate them with various items such as furniture, clothing, and eating utensils.

The decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls include natural patterns and auspicious patterns. Natural patterns are divided into animal patterns, plant patterns and other patterns. Animal patterns include horse patterns, sheep patterns, camel patterns, lion patterns, elephant patterns, etc., where plant patterns include peony patterns, lotus patterns, peach patterns, etc., and other decorative patterns include mountain patterns, water patterns, fire patterns, cloud patterns, etc., to show the national life and interpret the beauty of nature with beautiful and generous natural patterns. The auspicious patterns include dragon pattern, Hamur pattern, horn pattern, rectangular spiral, circle bowl pattern, etc., to pray for peace and auspiciousness with symbolic expressions, and entrust people with good wishes such as good fortune, longevity, auspiciousness, and festivity and mean an artistic expression of their ancestors' pursuit of a better life and yearning for a better life.

The common decorative patterns on the silver bowl include dragon pattern, bat pattern, four-soul pattern, zodiac pattern, eight-treasure pattern, eight immortal ritual

pattern, circular pattern, rectangular spiral, Hamur pattern, Lanza pattern, lotus petal pattern and curly grass pattern, etc., and these decorative patterns are almost all in the form of combinations. The following representations are derived from the author's analysis of the decorative patterns on silver bowls.

3.1. Suitable Patterns

The suitable pattern has a fixed shape limit, and the pattern material is processed and changed, and is organized within the fixed contour line. The suitable pattern has rigorous artistic characteristics, and the pattern change should not only reflect the characteristics of the object, but also intersperse with nature to form an independent form. The shape of the suitable pattern is complete, and the internal pattern, cleverly combined with the shape structure, is often applied to the corresponding items.

Suitable patterns are widely used in the decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls, and the decorative pattern at the bottom of the bowl feet is a complete suitable pattern, as shown in Figure 6. By extracting the decorations at the bottom of the bowl feet, you can clearly identify their characteristics of suitable pattern. The intestinal pattern in the picture on the left is interspersed with nature, engraved in the middle of the bowl foot, and encircled by two circular frame lines. The rectangular spirals are arranged in an orderly manner around the circular frame lines, and the outermost edge lines just confine them together, forming a complete suitable pattern. The middle and right pictures use the same compositional method. It can be seen that the decorative pattern on the bottom of each bowl foot is a complete suitable pattern. These suitable patterns can also be found in Mongolian felt tents, clothing, and saddles. It can be said that each Mongolian national decorative pattern is a suitable pattern, and each figure can be applied within a certain contour line. Decorative patterns created by Mongolian people come from daily life and can be decorated in all corners of life to beautify and enrich people's lives.



Figure 6. Curve Design with Suitable Pattern.

Note: Picture source: Compiled by the author

3.2. Symmetrical Composition

In everyday life and in works of art, symmetry represents a certain sense of balance, proportion and harmony, which in turn is associated with solemnity and beauty.

The symmetrical decorative patterns in Mongolian silver bowls are axisymmetric. Axial symmetry means that the two sides of an object are perfectly symmetrical, and that the object can be divided into two identical parts by a fictitious axis. For example, the eyes, ears, and nose on the left and right sides of the human face are axisymmetric. In the decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls, except for some animal patterns, many of them are axisymmetric, and some symmetrical patterns form a bipartite continuous form, such as circular pattern, rectangular spiral and other decorative patterns, as shown in Figure 7. The famous scientist Li Zhengdao said, "Symmetry is the most basic principle of life in the universe and the source of beauty." [3]



Figure 7. *Symmetrical Composition Pattern.*

Note: Picture source: drawn by the author

3.3. Circular Layout

Circular layout refers to a variety of objects or decorative patterns arranged and decorated around the circle, so that the whole presents a circular compositional style.

The decorative patterns on the Mongolian silver bowls as a whole take the form of a circular layout. Place the bowl mouth downwards and the bowl tray upwards and look down to see a top-down view in the form of a circular layout. Centered on the bottom of the bowl, all the patterns are regularly unfolded around the bottom of the bowl and the shape of the silver bowl itself is round, so the decorative form of the Mongolian silver bowl is in the form of a circular layout. As shown in Figure 8, the bowl holder is engraved with eight-treasure patterns, and there are Hamur patterns at the edges. Each eight-treasure patterns, arranged around a circle, are spaced at equal distances, and the bottom of the bowl foot is engraved with back patterns, dragon patterns and water ripples. Mongolians like round shapes, so the yurts they live in are round structures. The round "O" generally refers to the sun and the masculine symbol, which has always been the concept of sun worship among the northern nomads.



Figure 8. *Mongolian Silver Bowl.*

Note: Picture source: taken by the author

3.4. Rhythm and Rhyme

The rhythm is expressed in the regular continuous alternation and repetition of shapes and colors. [4] Rhythm and rhyme, going hand in hand, are a kind of regular mutation and rhythmic change is the origin of the development of things and the soul of art. In the design of artifacts, the regular movement or increase or decrease of the position, shape, size and proportion of the pattern is a means of rhythmic composition. Different compositions can form different rhythms. The sense of rhythm is adjusted according to the rhythm of the quantity, and the rhythm relationship can also be reflected in the color contrast, hue change, brightness gradient and the passage of color warmth and coldness. The rhythmic form in the decorative patterns for Mongolian silver bowl is mainly reflected in the continuous decorative pattern of the two sides, which is a continuous movement composed of repeatedness, has the regularity of movement, and promotes the decorative pattern to show the change of modulation and frustration.

Rhythm refers to the alternating and orderly rhythm in music and the coherent and orderly rhythm in decorative patterns, which is a synthesis of internal laws and

changes, and has unity. The repetition and variation of decorative patterns prepare the conditions for a sense of rhythm.

The rhyme and rhythm of the the decorative patterns for Mongolian silver bowl has many forms of expression. The continuous decorative pattern engraved on the silver bowl produces a bright rhythm in a repetitive style. The decorative patterns repeated up and down, and left and right can also produce a sense of rhythm, and the Mongolian silver bowl is engraved with a rhythmic decorative pattern, which sublimates the visual beauty. As shown in Figure 9, it is a decorative pattern that repeats up and down, left and right, and there are subtle changes in the process of repetition. The up and down, left and right are repeated in a coherent and orderly manner, or a different pattern is designed in the middle of the two repeated patterns to connect them with each other and break the pattern. This kind of decorative pattern with rhythm and rhythm is visually fuller and richer.



Figure 9. *Partial View of Silver Bowl.*

Note: Picture source: Compiled by the author

3.5. Exaggerated Deformation

Exaggeration refers to the characterization of parts or whole of decorative patterns, highlighting the shape, appearance and charm of the “expressive object”, and enhancing the decorative effect. Exaggeration is mainly to exaggerate the point of the thing itself, so as to highlight the characteristics and enhance the visual impact of the traditional pattern. [4] It can be said that exaggeration is to enlarge, shrink, or deform the features of the expressive object, resulting in obvious changes in strength and weakness. Change the original appearance of the pattern, emphasize the subjective feeling, exaggerate, deform, simplify and highlight the characteristics of the pattern, so that the decorative pattern is more abstract and typical.

The decorative patterns of Mongolian silver bowls, whether they are flowers and trees, mountains and rivers, or cattle, horses, fish and insects, can be given a strong emotion through exaggerated deformation. The image portrayed after exaggeration and distortion is more vivid. The combination and structural form in the decorative patterns for the Mongolian silver bowl reflect the unique aesthetic taste of the Mongolian nation. As shown in Figure 10, the bat pattern engraved on the silver bowl in the left picture has a pair of pointed ears, a round and bulging figure, and two semicircular wings, which look round and lovely overall. The bat pattern engraved on the silver bowl on the right has a slender figure, a pair of pointed ears, and two leaf-like wings, showing a three-dimensional state as a whole. Both of these bat patterns have evolved through exaggerated deformations and create a striking contrast.



Figure 10. *Partial View of Silver Bowl.*

Note: Picture source: Compiled by the author

4. Conclusions

As an important part of Mongolian gold and silver ware, Mongolian silver bowl is both an indispensable living utensil in the daily life of Mongolian people and the accumulation of Mongolian history and culture, living customs, religious beliefs and aesthetic consciousness, which has a strong grassland atmosphere, and has distinctive national characteristics. The design expression of Mongolian silver bowls, whether it is modeling characteristics or decorative patterns, is diverse. While inheriting the traditional skills of the ancestors, the plastic art of Mongolian silver bowl innovates. Only by continuous innovation and development can we absorb more nutrients and obtain new vitality, so that the Mongolian silver bowl glows with a stronger and more dazzling light.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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