

Research on the Aesthetic Consciousness of Furniture Decorations in Ming Dynasty and the Application of Modern Design

Siqi Wei¹

¹ College of Industrial Design, Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, Wuhan, Hubei, China

ABSTRACT

The Ming Dynasty is the peak period in the history of Chinese furniture design. Its style features elegance and simplicity, thus forming a distinctive feature of furniture of Ming Dynasty. Pattern decoration is also an important part of furniture design and one of the important methods to beautify furniture. Looking at the development of the decorative patterns of furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty, it is found that the decorative patterns and the aesthetic consciousness behind them are closely related to human production and life. On the one hand, they reflect the spiritual outlook of society, and on the other hand, they beautify human material life. The development of furniture decoration in the Ming Dynasty is inseparable from the economy, culture, politics and religion of the Ming Dynasty. Most furniture decoration can be classified as auspicious decoration, which fully reflects the people's yearning for a better life. Through the description of the furniture decoration of Ming Dynasty, the modern decoration content is extracted, and the traditional cultural innovation is integrated into the modern design.

Keywords: Furniture of Ming Dynasty, Decorative pattern research, Aesthetic thinking.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the renaissance of Chinese traditional culture, the innovative design and development of furniture of Chinese style has a new field. Taking furniture of Ming Dynasty as a starting point, this paper studies the shape lines of furniture of Ming Dynasty, especially the simple and elegant decorative patterns, and finds that the aesthetic ideas and life attitudes behind the decorative patterns are applied to modern design. In this study, the patterns of furniture in the Ming Dynasty, the image and aesthetic ideas of the patterns in the Ming Dynasty are summarized, the image suitable for modern products is selected, and the traditional patterns in the Ming Dynasty are applied to modern design.

Chinese furniture development, is particularly prominent in the idea and technique of creation. Because of its unique and unrepeatability technology and exquisite materials, it gradually forms a stable and distinctive furniture of "Ming style", pushing the design and production of ancient Chinese furniture to the peak. The study on the peak period of ancient Chinese furniture in the Ming Dynasty has obvious effects on the innovation of new Chinese-style furniture. From the aesthetic point of decorative patterns, this study analyzes the creation idea and technology behind the decorative patterns of furniture in Ming Dynasty, takes its essence and applies it to the innovative design of modern new furniture of Chinese style, so that the essence of furniture in Ming Dynasty can be applied in modern design.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Chinese furniture has always been dominated by wooden furniture, among which the Ming Dynasty, as the peak period in the history of




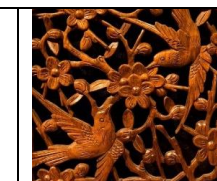
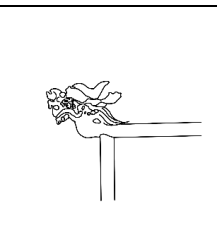


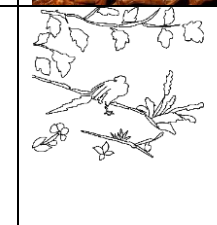




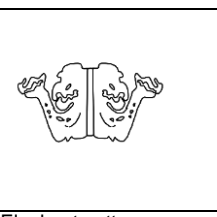
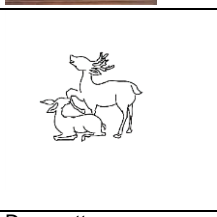
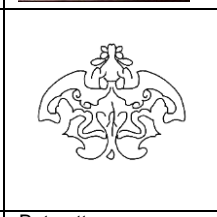
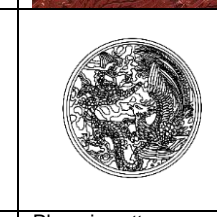
3. DECORATIVE PATTERNS OF FURNITURE IN MING DYNASTY AND ITS CREATION IDEA

3.1 Specific Classification of Decorative Patterns and the Aesthetic Ideas

There is a rich variety of furniture in Ming Dynasty. The style of furniture includes the rigorous standards of the Song Dynasty and the

magnificence of the Yuan Dynasty, focusing on the combination of structure, material and shape. The use of materials in the Ming Dynasty is ingenious. In the aspect of decoration, it is mostly carved decoration method. The textures with higher frequency include Kuilong pattern, Hui pattern, plant pattern, Kylin pattern and so on. ("Table 1")

Table 1. Animal patterns (source: self-made by the author)

Animal pattern	Picture				
	Pattern extraction				
	pattern	Kuilong Pattern	Chilong pattern	Kylin pattern	bird pattern
	Features	Having teeth, horns, manes and hyenas Clear scales, claw and tails	The dragon head is full and wide and there are many bulges The image is clumsy, heavy and old	Single horn Oxtail scale and shell on the body	combining with plant lines light body Strong sense of motion
	Picture				
Pattern extraction					
pattern	Elephant pattern	Deer pattern	Bat pattern	Phoenix pattern	
Features	infinite force being charmingly naive	nimble The shape of antlers is complex	combining with other patterns Strong symmetry	feather and accessory pinna being upward or facing sun	

3.1.1 Animal Pattern

- Dragon pattern

Dragon is a totem symbolizing kingship and divine power, and also an image worshipped by people in history. As the leader of scale insects, dragons can promote clouds and rain, benefit all things, make the weather smooth, and provide

adequate food and clothing. In addition, the dragon is also a symbol of virtue and auspiciousness. Dragon patterns in classical furniture decoration can be divided into two categories: conventional and variant patterns. The most common dragon pattern is mainly characterized by the Ming and Qing Dynasties: the dragon head is full and broad, with many ridges, and the image is humble and dignified. The head has two horns, thick hair, and is

wrapped toward the back. The big jaw is shaped like the lower jaw. The nose is mostly in the form of Ruyi (wishes), or like a lion's nose, snake's body, scales, four huge claws, and sharp claws.

Kuilong pattern is the most representative animal pattern of furniture in the Ming Dynasty. Kuilong is a mythical animal name. It is said that during the reign of the Yellow Emperor, the princes found strange beasts in the Liushan of the East China Sea. They looked like cattle, were green and hornless, and could walk with one foot. When they came in and out of the water, there was wind and rain. Their eyes were like the sun and the moon, and their voice was like thunder. They were named "Kui". The Yellow Emperor killed him and took the skin to make a drum. It sounded for 500 li. Kuilong is characterized by its patterned feet and tail and square corners.

Chilong is a legendary dragon without horns, also known as the flood dragon. This kind of ornamentation is more common in the handed-down furniture of Ming and Qing Dynasties. Chi pattern originated in the Spring and Autumn Period, prevailed in the Han Dynasty, and ran through other periods, especially in furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty. The tail of the dragon is often in the form of rolled grass, also known as "grass dragon". The characteristic of Chi in furniture decoration is that its limbs and dragon patterns curl. So even if the Chi pattern is not the main pattern, it will also be the auxiliary pattern.

The images of dragons, as common decorative patterns on furniture, are as follows: positive dragons, frontal dragons, lateral dragons, walking dragons, dragons playing with water, dragons playing among clouds, dragon teaching little dragons, dragon playing with pearls, etc. The characteristics of the dragon pattern in the Ming Dynasty are that no matter what the posture of the dragon body is, it has a thin neck and a small head, and the dragon hair is mostly towering from the two corners, showing that hairs are upright towards the crown with the anger. The mouth is opened, the dragon eyebrow is upward, and the five fingers of the dragon claw are in the shape of a windmill. At the end of the Ming Dynasty, there was no significant change in the posture of the dragon.

- Kylin pattern

As a typical auspicious animal in ancient China, kylin is a symbol of good luck. The decorative patterns on furniture of Ming and Qing Dynasties are very distinctive, either squatting or standing,

looking back at the sun, or carrying children with their heads upright. Kylin is an auspicious gods. It is mainly used for praising peace and longevity. Also, it is often used in houses. And there is also a folk saying that "Kylin can bring children".

- Phoenix pattern

Phoenix patterns are usually applied in furniture decoration. In addition, there are male and female phoenixes. The male and female phoenix will fly together and sing in harmony. Therefore, "phoenix is singing in the morning", meaning that the talent are born at the right time, and "phoenix is singing in harmony", meaning that there is good luck for wedding. Like dragons and snakes, phoenix is also a totem of ancient Chinese people. Phoenix is once regarded as the representative of the noblest women in the feudal dynasty, matching with "dragon", the symbol of the emperor. The auspicious dragon and phoenix patterns commonly seen in traditional furniture are: prosperity brought by the dragon and the phoenix, phoenix singing in harmony, and two dragons playing with pearls. The phoenix has been regarded as the auspicious bird for generations, and it is considered as the most beautiful among the feather insects, symbolizing beauty and peace.

- Bat pattern

Bat pattern is a traditional Chinese pattern with auspicious meanings. In traditional customs, "蝠" (bat) is often used as the homophonic "福" (blessing) to form auspicious patterns. "福" is the general name for the happiness of life in China. Therefore, bat patterns are widely used. For the furniture in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, bat patterns vary considerably, including upside down bats, double bats, and four bats holding longevity. There are more patterns combining with other mascots, such as one blessing in front, obtaining blessing at time, and having great luck.

- Deer pattern

In ancient times, deer was regarded as a kind of deity. As "鹿" (deer) and "禄" (lu) are homophonic, "鹿" (deer) means "禄" (lu) in auspicious patterns. The pattern of a hundred deer is called "Bailu"; deer and bat together are called "good fortune and good fortune"; the combination of deer and pine means that "the pine and deer bring the spring"; combined with cranes, it means that they bring the spring; sometimes, it is also used with longevity to praise for "the prosperity and health".

- Elephant pattern

Elephants are auspicious believed by ancient people. The elephant is powerful, but gentle, charming naive and honest. At the same time, it is also regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness and strength, and is also known as the virtue of beasts. Considering the furniture of Ming Dynasty, children riding elephants means good luck; a lady riding an elephant and holding Ruyi represents good luck; and an elephant carrying a vase represents a peaceful scene.

3.1.2 Plant Pattern

The plant pattern reflects the people's reverence and worship of nature in the Ming Dynasty. Common plant patterns include twig patterns, peony patterns, curly grass patterns, etc. But they have a common feature, namely, good luck and peace. The characteristics of plant patterns are as follows. ("Table 2" "Table 3")

Table 2. Plant patterns (source: self-made by the author)






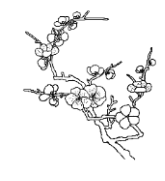










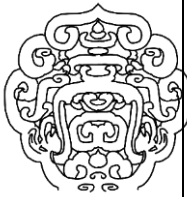
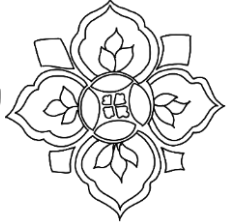
plant pattern	Picture			
	Pattern extraction			
	pattern	Peony pattern	Lotus pattern	plum blossom pattern
	Features	clear leaf lines being both dignified and graceful	Lotus leaf Lotus being in early puberty	being arrogant in form
	Picture			
	Pattern extraction			
	pattern	Curly grass pattern	Twig pattern	lucid ganoderma pattern
Features	Plant abstraction	Branch symmetry abstraction Reflecting the dynamic sense of twig winding	vivid curved shape clear lucid ganoderma grain	

Table 3. Auspicious patterns of three religions (source: self-made by the author)





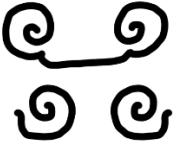
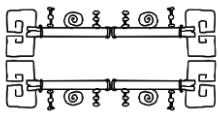
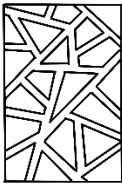

Three religious decorations	Picture			
	Pattern extraction			
	pattern	Eight Trigrams Pattern	Buddhist Pattern	arm chair
	Features	Most of the patterns used are conducive to being an immortal	Pure decoration	orbicular sky and rectangular earth, and moderate harmony

3.1.3 Other Auspicious Patterns

The decorative motifs on furniture in the Ming Dynasty were in variety, and the patterns with auspicious meanings accounted for the majority. For example, lucid ganoderma pattern has the meaning of bringing the dead back to life; peony patterns imply auspiciousness, wealth and dignity;

among the flowers, plum blossoms, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum represent the integrity; and there are also pine trees that symbolize longevity. Different kinds of decorative patterns have a common auspicious meaning, which reflects people's pursuit and yearning for a better life. ("Table 4")

Table 4. Geometric pattern (source: self-made by the author)

Geometric pattern	Picture				
	Pattern extraction				
	pattern	cloud pattern	fret	ice crack	thunder pattern
	Features	Order, regularity and seriousness			

Geometric patterns refer to the refinement of natural plants, animals and natural themes. The most commonly used geometric patterns include hui, chi, ice, thunder, etc. Based on ordinary geometric patterns, furniture decoration is arranged in order of regularity, irregularity, repetition, gradual change and emission, forming complex and

diverse decorative effects. For example, dalbergia odorifera bed with valve cover of yuedong style in the Ming Dynasty is based on four cloud patterns, connected in a cross shape, and arranges complex patterns on a regular skeleton to form an orderly, regular and serious pattern.

The development of furniture in the Ming Dynasty was closely related to the prosperity of the economy at that time and the change of technology, as well as to foreign exchanges. The furniture patterns of the Ming Dynasty reflected the aesthetic requirements of the people at that time and the cultural patterns of the whole society. In this regard, this shows the love of life, a yearning for happiness and peace, and a tireless pursuit of a better life. Therefore, it is necessary to learn and study these excellent traditional cultures, and apply them to contemporary design, so as to truly revitalize Chinese traditional culture.

3.2 The Aesthetic Idea of Patterns in the Ming Dynasty

The life themes of furniture of Ming Dynasty are rich and colorful, including not only the inheritance of auspicious clouds, dragons and phoenixes, but also the legends of characters, as well as the life scenes reflecting the times, society, life and culture. The design gives people a kind, natural and warm feeling, which is not only the meaning of life, but also a philosophy of life. For example, the "plum blossoms, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum" are used to show their noble character, reflect an extraordinary and refined temperament, or represent their own personalities. The life scene decoration of furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty can create a harmonious home atmosphere, which exerts a subtle influence on the user's attitude towards life, and is beneficial to building a harmonious social relationship, a positive lifestyle, an optimistic, quiet, easy-going and tolerant character. Based on the history and culture of 5000 years in China, a unique aesthetic concept of the Chinese people has been formed. The furniture decoration style with distinctive national characteristics in Ming Dynasty is also a significant feature in the world.

4. THE APPLICATION OF FURNITURE PATTERNS OF MING DYNASTY IN MODERN DESIGN

4.1 Patterns Follow the Principle of Natural Beauty

The furniture decoration of the Ming Dynasty set a good example for later generations with the simple concept of "harmony between man and nature". The furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty pursues simplicity and natural beauty, and

its decoration is evolved from nature, such as treasures, animals, animals, etc., which is consistent with the natural elements required by modern design, reflecting a design concept of natural beauty.

Today, when the material life is increasingly standardized and mechanized and the urban environment is increasingly unified, people's mentality is gradually out of balance, and even a kind of impetuous mood appears. With the development of science and technology, people's yearning for returning to nature is becoming stronger and stronger. They increasingly want to feel the beauty of nature around them, and they begin to pursue a pure and colorful natural atmosphere. Therefore, while meeting this psychological factor of modern people, returning to nature and showing nature are exactly what contemporary designers lack and pursue. The furniture with the characteristic of Ming Dynasty is the best example.

4.2 The Application of Simple and Elegant Decoration Style of Furniture

The furniture of the Ming Dynasty is characterized by simplicity, smooth lines, complexity and appropriateness, showing a concise and modern aesthetic sense. Based on this, the furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty properly sets off the complexity, large area of simplification and contrast between the real and the false, creates a simple temperament of "nothing", so that it presents a dignified and meaningful sense of beauty.

In terms of appearance, furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty pays attention to the smoothness of lines, which makes people feel a relaxed and soft aesthetic feeling and maximizes the unity of mechanics, aesthetics and functions. This simple, smooth and symmetrical feature makes the furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty simple, calm and grand, which can not only meet the functional requirements, but also have a beautiful shape.

In the aspect of architecture, furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty pays attention to science and preciseness, and uses the construction method of "big wood frame" to make its proportion coordinated, soft and hard.

In terms of decoration, it is simple and just right. A little is better than a lot. The lines are simple, fine and not artificial. Sometimes, the carving is mainly

made of lines or small fine reliefs, which contrast with the large area of bright, clean and simple materials. Although there are few patterns, each piece has a pleasant meaning and image, just like the jade of Song Dynasty, which is simple and dignified, giving furniture with the feature of Ming Dynasty a dignified and meaningful sense of beauty.

Simplicity is the aesthetic realm of returning to simplicity, and the expression of simplicity and purity. Modern people are busy, eager for complete physical and mental relaxation, and advocate simple and moderate decoration. It reflects the human mentality of getting rid of complexity and pursuing simplicity and nature. At the same time, designers should also abandon luxurious and elegant design, follow the moderate principle of "being people-oriented, simple and natural", and design simple and pure products that are more suitable for modern people to meet people's emotional, natural and rational needs. This minimalist style is bound to become the mainstream of design. This also gives us the inspiration of furniture with the features of Ming Dynasty.

5. CONCLUSION

As the representative of Chinese classical furniture, the furniture of the Ming Dynasty, with its unique and elegant decorative style, can not only meet people's physiological needs, but also meet people's psychological needs. It is a good design example, and the design ideas it contains are also worthy of contemporary reference. Through the research and summary of the aesthetic thought contained in its patterns, it is worth learning and applying it to modern design to pursue the development of art design with its own characteristics while carrying forward Chinese traditional culture.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Siqi Wei.

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