A Study of Traditional Motifs in the Context of Digitalization
With the Lion Motif as an Example

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ABSTRACT

The lion motif was the earliest animal heraldic motif to emerge, and its stylized postures are the richest of all heraldic motifs. After the lion was introduced to China, lion motifs developed, and lion art was localized in China, with early lions in caves, lions in murals, lion motifs in gold and silver, lion brocades, porcelain lion motifs and other forms of folk lion art gradually coming to the fore. This paper will analyze the different uses of lion prints in gold and silverware, weaving, sculpture and furniture, explore the history of the localization of lion prints and interpret lion prints from multiple perspectives. The current rapid development of the internet and big data provides new technologies and forms for the inheritance and development of traditional prints, which will be displayed to the public through modern digital technology in their typical forms and most essential meanings. The traditional patterns will be presented to the public in their typical form and most essential meaning through modern digital technology.

Keywords: lion motif, digital, traditional motif

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional Chinese culture has accumulated over 5,000 years of history, producing the crystallization of thousands of years of civilization. Within this profound traditional culture, motifs have been an essential part of the development of Chinese history and have evolved as society has changed. Eventually the lion pattern was combined with local cultural elements in Tang Dynasty China and was accepted by the public [1]. This essay focuses on the lion motif, widely used in our traditional life and rich in form and meaning. On the one hand, lion motifs can be used not only in two-dimensional planes such as ceramics and brocades but also in three-dimensional carvings on bronze mirrors and sculptures; on the other hand, they can reflect people's aesthetic habits and values in a particular time. Whatever the application of the lion motif, it represents people's expectations and wishes for a better life. Based on digital technology, a more liberal form of pattern dissemination is explored. Through the advantages of mobile and other interactive and exciting platforms, traditional patterns are presented realistically and interestingly to the public.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE LION MOTIF

Originating in the two river valleys and the Indus Valley, where the lion was prevalent as an imposing sculpture, reflecting the lion motif as an ideological tool, a symbol of power, a warrior and a symbol of victory, the lion image is commonly worshipped and appears in several works of art. In China, the lion motif was spread to the country as an exotic species, one of which was the opening of the Silk Road, linking political and cultural exchanges between East and West, with silk and porcelain as essential commodities for trade exchanges in the East, as well as being the leading carriers of ancient traditional motifs. Through the Silk Road, the lion, an exotic species, arrived in China. Secondly, with the introduction of Buddhism into China, the lion was often used as a mount for the Bodhisattva. As the lion was the king of all beasts and able to deter all beasts, the lion became a symbol of the power of Buddhism, and its status increased as it did so [2].

In traditional Chinese ornamentation, the beast of prey is one of the five official motifs. The flying bird is the official civil motif. The lion motif is considered the

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second rank of the official military motif, evident in the old official uniforms. There are many classical furniture pieces carved with lion motifs used by the people, with a variety of meanings, including the role of a guardian of the house and the town and auspicious meanings such as the expression of the five generations together, the five sons and grandsons. The lion is also a traditional Chinese auspicious animal, often placed at the entrance and in the halls, to calm down the house. In the Qianyan Tang Classical Book, it is said that the lion was the king of beasts and could calm all beasts. In ancient times, stone lions and lion carvings were often used to 'lock doors', 'calm tombs' and 'protect Buddhas' and ward off evil spirits.

3. THE LION MOTIF IN TRADITIONAL DESIGN

3.1. The use of lion prints in woven fabrics

With the economic prosperity of the Tang dynasty, the Silk Road more active and people's minds emancipated, the lion motif was widely used in decoration, mainly as a motif theme, and gradually evolved into the traditional motif of practical art decoration.

The lion pattern continued to incorporate other elements (such as the poinsettia and pomegranate patterns) in the development of the pattern, such as the standing lion and poinsettia brocade of the Tang dynasty, (Figure 1)and the appearance of the lion on the textile was developed during the great unbroken Silk Road of the Wei, Jin and Northern Dynasties. The main subjects of this pattern are lions and elephants. At the time, the lion motif was more an expression of the imagination of an exotic species of 'four-legged beast'. In the middle of the pattern are the Chinese characters for 'daji', 'Yi' and 'wang', and the combination of the pattern and the Chinese characters in the brocade also represents an auspicious symbolism. The Chinese Silk Museum has a collection of lion-beaded brocades. The lion pattern is a testimony to the exchange of civilizations between East and West along the Silk Road, which brought Persian and West Asian lion patterns to China and combined them with China's own traditional culture, demonstrating the tolerance and confidence of Chinese culture.

The use of silk weaving, both in ancient times and after the Silk Road, is condensed with more cultural connotations. In modern times silk weaving is still a powerful tool for promoting traditional culture, and the extraction, interpretation and redesign of traditional motifs and their reapplication to silk weaving is both a situation for the new age and a way of taking the best of the past. Contemporary cultural experts, designers and inheritors should think about how to combine tradition and modernity to recreate the new model in the production life of the public, and in this way to promote China's excellent traditional pattern culture.

Figure 1 Tang dynasty standing lion and Baohua brocade

3.2. The use of lion motifs in porcelain

For the Chinese, the lion motif is all too familiar. The lion motif in porcelain is also set off with decorative motifs such as embroidered balls. The bright colours on the entire surface of the porcelain are visually striking and add to the decorative flavour of the porcelain. The blue and white porcelain, also known as 'shade blue', is modelled on the appearance of blue and white jade and the blue and white glazed lion button incense burner. Although the lion was initially introduced to China as an exotic creature with a veil of mystery, as the king of beasts, appearing as a dignified, majestic and courageous figure, it gradually developed and grew under the soil of the Chinese land, giving birth to a 'localized' image of the lion with a distinctly Chinese national charm. (Figure 2)

Porcelain is a great Chinese invention, according to the color points can be roughly divided into monochrome glaze, blue and white, doucai, five colors, red glaze, etc. [3]. The lion pattern was passed down to each other as an auspicious symbolic object in ancient times, both in the leadership and in the homes of common people. The lion pattern was loved by the ancient Chinese craftsmen and was beautifully designed in porcelain. The lion pattern was designed in a flat and three-dimensional way, so that it is liked by most people to this day.

Figure 2 A tri-coloured hu man riding a lion A phoenix-headed, Qing dynasty jug alum-red taishi shaoshi wall vase A blue and white glazed lion button incense burner, Southern Song dynasty

3.3. The use of lion motifs in furniture

After centuries of accumulation, the furniture formed under traditional Chinese culture has also acquired a unique name - Chinese furniture. The beauty of Chinese furniture lies in its form and its richly symbolic carvings, among them the carved lion. In Ming furniture, in particular, the motifs are generally composed of lions, which are imposing and fierce, but also constitute a lion playing with a ball, which Han Chinese folk call 'a lion rolling an embroidered ball, a good thing at the back. There are also various deformations of lions called 'embroidered ball brocade' "The lion motifs are mostly used on the backs of chairs, armrests, tooth plates and leg feet of furniture, and also on hanging screens, for example, in the case of a lion entering a treasure, or in the case of a tribute, as a metaphor for "peace under heaven" and "salubriousness in all countries". "There are also double lions being used as inset screens. In furniture, the lion motif is a timeless oriental beauty. (Figure 3)

The pursuit of beauty has never ceased in ancient and modern times, and the decorative motifs in furniture are a metaphor for man's desire for a better life. The art of the lion gradually developed from a single image in the early days to a variety of artistic styles, and the art of the exotic lion was gradually secularized [4].From the development of Ming furniture to the present day, and especially in the contemporary neo-Chinese style that is gradually emerging, the patterns and textures have been inherited from traditional Chinese patterns and simplified to make the furniture not only more exquisite and beautiful, but also to give it an auspicious meaning. The traditional motifs are used as a base for the diversification of contemporary furniture design.

Figure 3 A carved mahogany lion-designed guiffure couch, Qing dynasty

4. THE MODERN TRANSMISSION PATH OF THE TRADITIONAL LION MOTIF

4.1. Visual linguistic communication of traditional lion motifs

At present, the concept of traditional motifs is known to most people, but there is still a lack of understanding of the specific connotations of the craft. The general public gets the experience of traditional motifs mainly through visits to museums or other exhibitions, film and television campaigns and documentaries. However, this traditional mode of communication is less interactive and more passive, and its content is mainly static. Interpreting the semantics of traditional pattern symbols from the perspective of visual linguistics and specifically studying various visual language features of traditional patterns are important to better grasp the essence of traditional Chinese culture [5].

On the one hand, digital technology has become a new cultural carrier and a factor of cultural production, significantly contributing to the development of cultural industries. Digitalization can breathe new life into traditional motifs, with symbolic pictorial design and digital application as the core and the dissemination of traditional motifs as the source of the design. The final result is a more innovative and experiential digital development of cultural and creative products. On the other hand, designers can semantically relate the craft texts and images of Chinese traditional patterns. A knowledge map of traditional patterns is established on the Internet, and a knowledge network related to traditional patterns is formed through big data technology. This approach can provide new paths for researchers to study and visualize knowledge, and new perspectives for the general public to understand traditional patterns.

4.2. Digitalization for the dissemination of traditional motifs

"Digital design" has been included in China's "national medium and long-term science and technology development plan", which also opens an important chapter in the development of China's traditional pattern heritage and innovation [6]. The design of contemporary digital art and culture in the context of heritage maintains a combination of culture and art, tradition and innovation, and interactivity and efficiency in the form of cultural innovation. The project can be used to create a hybrid digital creative experience and promote the lion pattern motif through new media platforms such as WeChat, Jitterbug and Xiaohongshu. Combined with online APPs, public numbers and mini-programs, it presents a dynamic presentation combined with the storyline of the pattern, making the development and changes of the lion pattern into a storyline that is vividly reflected in front of the public. The internet provides many forms of expression for art and design, and the digital medium has developed in a more diverse way than traditional media.

For example, the Palace Museum has created the "Digital Palace" app. This app provides services such as cloud touring the Forbidden City, online exhibition

shopping and online ticketing, while the WeChat public number "micro Forbidden City" and the microblog "Palace Museum" are linked in the app, providing a new digital experience. Combining digital, cloud-based, AI and culture. The programme helps audiences to 'travel' to the Ming and Qing dynasties and experience the fascination of Chinese history. At the same time, these precious treasures will be well preserved and documented, allowing the classics to live on forever.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As a kind of traditional Chinese culture, the lion pattern itself has been refined and extracted by generations of designers, showing the wisdom of the ancient people[9]. In addition to the application of the lion pattern in ceramics, brocade, sculpture and furniture, jade, wood and brick carvings all carry symbolic lion patterns to pursue the beautiful spiritual prayers of longevity and peace, and many children and many blessings. People can fully feel the profoundness of our traditional culture from these designs. At the same time, with the slow progress of society, people's aesthetics and values have improved, and the powerful lion design has become a symbol of the cohesion of the Chinese nation, a sign of the self-confidence of traditional culture, and a reflection of the national spirit of defiance of evil and courage to forge ahead. Today, people still love to venerate the good wishes of the lion motif, and the form of the lion motif is becoming more and more simple as it develops. The lion motif is still active in clothing design; the charm of the lion motif is still reflected in porcelain furniture; the stone lion culture is still visible in gardens in architecture; thus the lion motif also plays a role in promoting Chinese culture and passing on Chinese civilization.

How to make the lion pattern further spread and inherit, through modern digital technology, graphic interpretation, extraction, reconstruction, in its traditional form, taking the path of modern technology, further analysis and inheritance of traditional Chinese patterns. The development of traditional patterns requires the comprehensive use of digital media, digital animation, and other modern technological means to form a systematic digital display of pattern patterns [7]. It is also a new way of communicating traditional Chinese motifs, which allows the public to interact with them. Modern communication of traditional patterns can combine traditional culture with design and use internet technology to present it in a unique way, giving traditional patterns interactivity, fun and uniqueness through digital technology and making the communication of patterns more accessible to the public so that they can truly understand and enjoy traditional Chinese patterns.

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