Content of Temple Jian-nian Ornamentation in Taiwan and Cultural Implications

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Abstract: Jian-nian ornamentation is often known as “jianhua”and is known as”qianci”in China's Guangdong Province. Jian-nian is a unique form of sculpture that originated in southern China, and still flourishes in the Guangdong and Fujian areas. Because in early days the emigrant from mainland South Fukien region for remembering fondly of home town and streamed into Taiwan, the development in process long time and produced a special style, particularly on the topic content, because special geography environment in Taiwan and customs the people live and feel, developed to differ from the performance of China, which can mostly be classified as the following four types: (1) Flowers and birds, (2) human figures, (3) four-legged animals, and (4) decorative designs.

This study seeks to classify the various types of subject matter seen in Jian-nian eave ornaments and investigate their significance. I hope that the results of this study can guide craftsmen restoring historic sites and prevent the loss of outstanding traditional works. In particular, I hope that craftsmen will avoid tearing down and reconstructing Jian-nian ornamentation guided only by their personal ideas in cases when they cannot identify the original subject matter or do not understand its significance.

Key words: Jian-nian, Taiwanese traditional architecture, jianhua, qianci, traditional craftsmanship

1. Introduction
Taiwan's traditional architecture roof decoration, Jian-nian is the mainly expression form. Jian-nian ornamentation is often known as “jianhua”and is known as”qianci”in China's Guangdong Province. people in Chao-zhou call that “Ju-rao”, “Tie-rao”, “Kou-rao”, is a characterized craft form in the South of China, the areas of Guangdong and Fukien that roughly prevail up to the present. The making process of Jian-nian must wrap up the skeleton with the iron wire first, and make physique on the skeleton with the modulated gray clay. Next, use a vice-like”iron shear”, cut out the ceramic bowl in pieces to become the necessary all kinds of form, and then, insert and stick these pieces into the skeleton. Finally, all the details is decorated and finished with the colored drawing or pattern.

Because early Taiwan immigration mostly comes from the south of Fujian Province area in the mainland, they make the great majority on forms and styles of imitating the homeland building. It displays the contents of the ethical values of the traditional society, folk traditional custom, and expectation of the ideal life of people. All these explained the culture from the mainland has already been implanted among the people deeply in Taiwan, have caused very great influence on the folk art. This research is to probe into the influence caused toward folk art of culture from the ornamental point of view, for the purpose of distinguishing the craftsmen in the thought of
creating. The more important thing is to face these gradually lost craft forms, hope to arouse people's attention to it, study the discussion again, and find our own culture.

2. Research Methods
The research adopts the documental analyses, comparison with the image analyses, and field investigation methods to proceed. Study steps and procedures are roughly included the following three parts:

1. Document Analysis: Collect materials such as domestic and international relevant periodical documents, the doctor or master's theses, etc.; analyze and put “traditional architecture”, “Jian-nian ornamental” and “folk culture” theoretical bases meanings of relevant documents in order; proceed the documental data analyses of the whole in many aspects.

2. Comparison with the Image Data Analyses: Shoot the Jian-nian ornamental works, then, carry on the comparison of the image data through the bases of documental analyses. At the same time, discuss with the Jian-nian craftsman what differences between the images and the documents; from understanding the bases about Jian-nian ornamental design and cultural meanings in the middle.

3. Field Investigation: After studying in the relevant documents and collecting and digesting the image data, start the field investigation. The materials are collected through the methods of observation and interviews. On one hand, understand the forms and trends. On the other hand, understand the craftsman handles the methods and bases of composition and model. Discover the problems from it, in order to reconstruct the documental data and data-preparing for field investigation, confirm the documental records, supplement the shortcomings.

Field investigation takes Taiwan traditional architecture as the core. The choice of an interview with the personages relies mainly on the craftsmen who are engaged in the Jian-nian ornamental work at present.

3. subject matter content of Jian-nian
3-1 subject matter content of the flowers and birds’ Jian-nian
In all kinds of flowers, the most used one is the tree peony. In addition, there are chrysanthemum, plum blossom, camellia, water lily, lotus, and so on are often regarded as the birds and flowers' subject matter, too. Because they have something to do with monthlies and seasons, the frequency of their occurrence is higher than other flowers and plants. aforesaid several flowers often appear with the form of “great four seasons”, (spring plum blossom, summer lotus, autumn chrysanthemum, and winter camellia). Besides flowers are related to monthlies and seasons, flowers also have their own special meanings. In addition to all of the above, some flowers also often put together that symbolize the similar meaning, and become an aggregate theme1.

In obtaining materials from birds, phoenix is a common subject matter. The spiritual phoenix will appear only when the wise monarch was born. Because the phoenix has a so lofty position, often become one of the protagonists on Jian-nian ornament. Besides phoenix, there are still some other left, cranes, roosters, egrets, peacocks, magpies, swallows, eagles, golden pheasants and etc.

1 For example: ' four gentlemen ' - Plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum; ' four loves ' - Orchid, lotus, plum, chrysanthemum; ' four purities ' - Plum, sweet-scented osmanthus, chrysanthemum, narcissus; ' four flowers ' - Plum, narcissus, orchid, wintersweet, and etc.
3-2 Subject matter content of the human figures’ Jian-nian

The early agricultural society of Taiwan pays attention to the order of ethics, the ideas of good and evil, and emphasizes the spirit of the loyalty, filial piety, courtesy, and justice. In order to achieve the purpose to enlighten human heart. The decorations of the temple obtain materials from everybody’s fairy tales, historical allusions or opera novels that what's frequently heard can be repeated in detail naturally. In the folk mythical legend, the most familiar one is the legend of the Eight Immortals. The models of the Eight Immortals are also Chinese's favorite patterns, apply to life extensively; they mean to express good wishes and longevity, and are also been the lucky symbol that avoids evil spirits. Its become one of the craftsmen's favorite subject matter. Besides, fu-lu-shou\(^2\) is the subject matter that often appears. Because it represents people's supreme expectation and ideal, fu-lu-shou is always placed in the showiest position of the centrally located “zheng-ji (main ridge)”. Besides fairy tales, the human figures ornamental subject matter often obtains materials from the traditional novel, all based on an intact story, also focus on the story content, choose to conform with the plot of the traditional social moral concept, express noble sentiment such as loyalty, filial piety, etiquette, and justice, reach and teach the loyal social education function of teaching the filial piety by this.

3-3 Subject matter content of the four-legged animals’ Jian-nian

The dragon is one of Chinese's favorite totems, and the first of “four Spiritual beasts”\(^3\), so no matter in the palace or temple of the architecture, the dragon becomes most frequent animal. Chinese unicorn, god beast of legend, one of four Spiritual beasts, symbolizes an auspicious sign. In the folk legend, the Chinese unicorn is often ridden by the immortal, has the ability of avoiding ghost and evil, so it is placed on the roof and becomes the symbol that pursues good fortune and avoids disaster. The most common shape is that the back of the Chinese unicorn carries a boy\(^4\). In the subject matter of the beasts, “four beasts” is the common subject matter, too. Four beasts mean the tiger, leopard, lion, and elephant, four kinds of animals. Folk in Taiwan, these four efficacious beasts are related to Buddhism and Taoism. Nearly can see their images in each temple.

3-4 Subject matter content of the decorative designs’ Jian-nian

The ornamental kinds’ Jian-nian is for decorating a design at an unimportant position and for strengthening the building’s component. The ornamental composition subject matter of this kind mostly takes pattern content as the core. It is roughly divided into the following four kinds: (1) Flowers and fruits, (2) Aquatic organisms, (3) and (4) Auspicious items.

(1) Flowers and fruits: This subject matter of flowers is generally patterning. its form with the curve according to the growth state of the trailing plant. Because of the shaped characteristic joins the beginning to the end, symbolizes the meaning in succession; it is also a symbol of firing prevention. The pattern of fruits is in the

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\(^2\) Called “cai-zi-shou” from Taiwan local craftsmen.

\(^3\) The dragon, phoenix, tortoise, Chinese unicorn are jointly called “four Spiritual beasts”.

\(^4\) According to the records of “the picture of holy trace”: “Confucius was born, sees Chinese unicorn and jade book.” So, “gi-lin-song-zi (give a son by Chinese unicorn)” means the birth of an excellent person, the boy that Chinese unicorn sends here; it is a good talent in the century after growing up, and a virtuous official who assists the country.
application on of Jian-nian, reflects the expectation of rich life in the agricultural society. The fruit that often appear take native fruit in Taiwan as the core. These fruits mostly because of their characteristics or assonance, and is enclosed in order to the meaning of an auspicious blessing.

(2) Aquatic organisms: Taiwan is surrounded by sea because of the topography of island country, It is very natural result to use the aquatic organisms to be the ornamental subject matter, has formed the characterized ornamental style because of this. Because the aquatic organisms belong to the property of water, they also have the meaning of suppressing God of fire by this.

(3) Auspicious items: Since Chinese ancient times, the craft of the implements is extremely developed and also become the indispensable element in life. The craftsmen will utilize shape of the implements naturally as the pattern of the building decoration. These implements of line decorations reflect the ideal life that people expect, and include the symbol meaning of good luck and repelling evil spirits. The craftsmen often make this kind of subject matter up into “bo-gu-tu”[^5]; it is for the decoration of roof ridge and symbolizes grace and purity.

4. Conclusion
The construction of the temple is an important major issue in the traditional agricultural society. As regards to decorate buildings, be can't ignored certainly and quite pays attention to craftsman's exquisite degree of skill. In Chinese traditional art, the development of craft takes the architectural decoration, skill, and the spread folk culture as the cores. The content mentioned comprehensive in the front, no matter birds and flowers, personages, beast, or ornaments, these four kinds of subject matter exist because of abundant architectural aesthetic feeling, bring abundant folk culture subject matter to us, make us understand own impact on folk art of culture, it has many abundant pattern and subject matter, has a lot of amazing ones, the speciality produced because of change of time. These explained that Chinese culture is the creation of diversification, many systems, and many angles. Finally, today into the 21st century really can not let these that characterized craft forms in the South of China disappear. To us, these unique craft forms lead us to pass by from the system of folk culture; let us understand our culture is not poor, life is not dull, either, just we have forgotten too much.

5. reference
[1] Li Qian-Lang, (1993) Chao-tian-gong’s architecture and decorative art in Bei-gang, Yun-lin, financial group of Bei-gang Chao-tian-gong,.

[^5]: According to legend, Hui-Zong in Northern Song Dynasty orders a group of people, such as, Wang-Fu to compile the ancient objects in the hall “xuan-he-dian” into “xuan-he-bo-gu-tu”.

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