Use of Animal Shapes as Roof Ornaments in Traditional Taiwanese Architecture

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Abstract: Roofs play large roles in traditional Chinese architecture. It is also a symbol of status. As a consequence, special attention is paid to roof design, and many forms of ornamentation are used to intensify visual effect. In northern palace-style buildings representing the Chinese system of government officials, apart from images of fish and dragons, many auspicious creatures intended to beckon good fortune are placed on the roof. These auspicious roof ridge creatures entered Taiwan with immigrants from China's coastal Fujian province at an early date. After several hundred years of evolution under the influence of Taiwan's unique geographical and social environment, the development of these ornamental forms in Taiwan has diverged from that in China. This study explores the influence of culture on folk art from the angle of decoration, and uses this as a means of probing the mental context of craftsmen involved in making building ornaments. this study hopes to arouse people's interest in and inspire further study of these, in hope that we may reclaim our traditional cultural heritage.

Keyword: Taiwan traditional architecture, roof decoration, animal’s shape, traditional craft

1. Introduction
The early Taiwan province immigrants who were from the southern part of Fukien Province. The style design of the architecture mostly imitate form and style of the homeland. For this reason, Taiwan traditional architecture is no matter in the form or making method, all follow the building system of China Southern. According to Huang Shu-Gin’s record of “the record of Taiwan Straits’ Emissary”, in the early years of Ching Dynasty, will it be the 54th year of Kang-xi (A.D. 1715): “Quan-zhang’s suburb businessmen of Taiwan Straits initiate to build ‘Shui-xian temple’; the pavilion roof in the temple that carve and engrave the personage flowers are extremely exquisite work; all the craftsmen are from Chao-zhou.” From record described above, we can learn, craftsmen of the mainland China came to Taiwan to engage in the ornamental work of temple roof in the early years of Ching Dynasty. In the very early times, both ends of the ridge have gotten curved like beast’s horns. In representing the northern palatial architecture of Chinese official system, it can find a lot of good fortune symbols of auspicious beasts. These auspicious roof beasts were introduced by the early immigrants from the southern part of Fukien Province area in the mainland China to Taiwan. It’s developed out its own presentation different from China because of the special geographical environment and customs of Taiwan citizenry. Auspicious beasts of gods that the animal shapes on the roof roughly obtain materials from the mythology, with birds and beasts, and the aquatic organisms and etc. As regards ornamental angle, they have enriched the appearance of building; as regards its content displayed, fully reflect the traditional morals value, folk traditional custom and people's ideal hope to life.

2. Reason why the roof is ornamental
The roof occupies a quite portion in Chinese traditional architecture. The Chinese building especially pays attention to the roof, the greatest reason should relate to the fact that the Chinese building pursue “a magnificent and glorious view”. Both ends of the ridge are mostly to decorate with one kind of ornamental fish (Fig. 1) which is called “Chi-wei”. “Qianhanji” records: “Bo-liang Hall fire, there is a kind of fish in the sea in wizard speech that the tail looks like Chi; it has ability of evoking the spray and rainfall, and puts its shape on the roof can avoid the fire; Chi-wei is so placed on the roof naturally.” Thus, Chi-wei is so placed on the roof naturally. In representing the northern palatial architecture of the Chinese official system, besides the images of
the fish and dragon, can find “tao-shou” (Fig. 2) in a row on the Ridge of four corners. Decoration on the roof is more complicated shape and the more colorful in the South. Probing into its reason may be influenced by three following points: 1) The beautiful southern scenery that the influence of green hills and clear waters is abundant and bold naturally to use the color. 2) The products in the South are enriched with the people's livelihood, residents have surplus strength to do the ornaments. 3) It is remote from the capital of a nation, so long as does not offend against the imperial majesty directly, most local governments do not investigate. For these reasons, while comparing with strict design of the northern architecture, the southern architecture seems abundant and diversified.

3. The roof ornamental of animal shape

3-1 Gods’ auspicious beast

3-1-1 Dragon

The dragon is one of Chinese's favorite totems; with phoenix, tortoise, and Chinese unicorn are jointly called “four Spiritual beasts”; it is the first of four Spiritual beasts. It often appears on “zheng-ji (main ridge)” position of the roof in the ornamental; probing into its reason may be influenced by three following three points:

(1) Because the dragon is a body of the strip shape, and “zheng-ji (main ridge)” of the roof is just the structure of the strip shape, can meet dragon's characteristic on the composition on the space most.

(2) Chinese traditional architecture takes timber structure as the framework; the wooden type building is afraid of the fire. The dragon has been related to Sea God and rainwater in the fairy tale all the time; it is a symbol of water; therefore, it has been put and become the symbol that fired prevention on the roof.

(3) Since ancient times, the dragon is the loftiest Gods’ auspicious beast in people’s mind. In a lot of popular legends, the dragon represents a lucky and auspicious symptom so it is placed on “zheng-ji (main ridge)” of the roof and becomes the symbol that pursues good fortune and avoids disaster.

About the shape of dragon, it has already said, “san-ting- jiu-si” in Wang-fu of the Later Han Dynasty. Among Taiwan folk craftsmen spread of resembling “jiu-si” pithy formula and the statement about “long-you-san-duan”. Besides the normal shape of dragon on the ridge, can also see a lot of shapes related to dragon. Among them, the most famous one is “Ao-yu”, is one of the nine sons of the dragon in the legend. Lu-Rong's “Shu-yuan-za-ji” in Ming Dynasty records : “Ao-yu looked like dragons, preferred to swallow fire, stood on the top of the roof ridge.”. In the decoration of the ridge of a roof can often see the shape of “Ao-yu-tu-shui” (fig. 5 ). Some come to appear with the shape of the carp directly. No matter Ao-yu or carp, all contain the meaning of suppressing the god of fire and firing prevention.

3-1-2 Phoenix

In obtaining materials from birds, phoenix is a common subject matter. It is obvious that phoenix is not only the king of one hundred birds, there is one more point as the shape characteristic of phoenix; because the phoenix is the birds, it can make the trend towards soaring into the sky and emphasize the line of the tail by the flying dynamic state. The tail of phoenix appears radially, every feather can just fill in the space; this will cause the vision to be balanced (fig. 7). About the image of phoenix, according to Kuo Pwu's Commentaries to“Erya-shiniaio”: “chicken's head, a snake's neck, a swallow's jaw, a tortoise's back, a fish's tail, five colors, and about six meters height.”Folk craftsmen also spread an oral rhymed formula of painting phoenix.

Synthesized the description above, the characteristics of phoenix gather many kinds of fairy beasts and efficacious birds and shape up gradually; it has also expressed people's pursuit and expectation to ideal life fully.

3-1-3 Chinese unicorn

1What is called “tao-shou”, a celestial being is foremost, then in order for the dragon, phoenix, lion, heavenly horse, hippocampus, Suan-ni (a legendary beast of prey), Ya-yu, Xie-zhi (a legendary beast in ancient times), and corrida.

2 ‘San-ting’ means the head of dragon to the neck, the neck to the abdomen, and the abdomen to the tail; ‘jiu-si’ is a head as a cattle, a mouth as a donkey, an abdomen as a shrimp, a horn as a deer, ear as elephants, scale as fish, a moustache as a human being, an abdomen as a snake, and feet as phoenix.

3 One draw deehorn two shrimp eye, three draw dog nose four ox mouth, five draw lion bristle six fish scale, seven draw snake's body eight the fire inflammation, nine draw chicken's feet and the dragon.

4 According to Lin Dong-li master craftsman's oral report.

5‘Phoenix has three lengths; they are long eyes, long legs, and a long tail.’; “Phoenix has a head of golden pheasant, a cockscomb as ru-yi, a head as cloud, and wings as crane’s.”
Chinese unicorn, one of four Spiritual beasts, symbolizes an auspicious sign. Ching, Chen Huan “the Reinter-Pretation of Mao Shi Ch’uan in the Book of Ode” records: “elk’s body, horse’s feet, an ox tail, yellow, round hooves, a horn. the end of horn has flesh, its voice likes bell.” From the above describing, we can imagine the shape of the Chinese unicorn. 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. Because the shape of the Chinese unicorn is comparatively heavy, seldom appears on both sides of zheng-ji (main ridge) and is mostly located “yao-hua (in the middle of position)”. The most common shape is "gi-lin-song-zi" (fig.5); it 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.

3-2 general animals

3-2-1 The beasts

1. Four beasts: In the subject matter of the beasts, besides dragon and Chinese unicorn, “four beasts” (Fig. 11) is also the common subject matter. Four beasts mean the tiger, leopard, lion, and elephant. These four efficacious beasts are related to Buddhism and Taoism in Taiwan; nearly can see their images in each temple.
2. Horse: Since Chinese ancient times, horse is loved by people very much; not only it is the important transportation and indispensable fighting capacity resource in the battle field, but also has represented a hero's image.
3. Deer: Deer is a kind of macrobiotic celestial beasts from an ancient legend. Therefore, it is often used on various auspicious designs; the deer also sounds as same as “lu” of “fu-lu-shou (good fortune, prosperity, and longevity)” that has an implied meaning with official emolument. In addition, the deer often makes the ornamental composition up with other birds or flowers.
4. Rabbit: Ancient mythical legend, ‘there is a bird in the sun, there is a rabbit in the moon.’ And so, the rabbit becomes the representative of the moon.

3-2-2 Birds

1. Crane: Crane is the master of poultry, is called “yi-pin-niao (first-class bird) “. The crane often becomes the celestial being’s horse for riding in Taoism's story; the Hans are said the crane is a spiritual bird with longevity and deathlessness, riding it can fly to the sky and meet with the supernatural beings. It also has the meaning of noble and virtuous, and graceful.
2. Peacock: “Peacock” symbolizes literary grace, splendor, and nobleness because its feather is gorgeous; it’s commonly called as the “gentle bird”. According to the officer's uniform of Ching Dynasty, if there are coral and peacock's tail on the cap, all are “yi-pin-guan (a government officer in the highest rank)”; what is called “hong-ding-hua-ling”. So, the peacock symbolizes the meaning of the government officer's position.
3. Eagle: it has the following record that “chin ching”: “The eagle does not bully the small and weak, does not bully the Pregnancy, its justice is like this.” It is obvious the hawk has really possessed the heroic spirit.
4. Magpie: Magpie is a bird that reports success; in the legend, if you can hear its voice in the morning, it’s going to have a happy event in the same day; commonly called it as “xi-niao (a bird of happiness)”’. “chin ching” records: “The intellectual magpie appears to omen lucky.” It is thus clear that people all think magpie is a good omen.
5. Wood anemone: Wood anemone, also called “the bird of chang-chun”; the feather of old bird's head becomes white, it implies the silver hair. In the folk, it’s a metaphor as a couple with perfect harmony until old.
6. Egret: The “lu” of “lu-si (Egret)” and the “lu (emolument)” are the same assonance, and often use it as a metaphor. Egret seldom appears alone, mostly combines with other lucky flowers, and becomes the decoration on roof ridge.
7. Swallow: Swallow is a bird of passage, spring leave and autumn return, has a habit of moving; it is regarded as a symbol of autumn, often becomes an illustration of pursuing with the chrysanthemum.
8. Rooster: Rooster symbolizes the meaning of the scholarly honor of official rank and the official career goes smoothly and prosperously. According to the record of “shu-ying” of Zhou, liang-gong : “Draw a chicken in Chinese New Year, hang it in the hall; the honorable person likes to draw a big chicken on the stone. During the Chinese New Year, you can see a symbol of chicken everywhere that represents auspicious; it's called ‘shi-sha-da-ji’.” So, chicken has a symbol meaning of avoiding evil spirits.

4-2-3 the aquatic organisms

1. Goldfish: The fish and shrimp have become common subject matters of Chinese tradition design since ancient times; fish and “yu (surplus)” are the same sound, so having fish implies meaning “yu-yu (surplus)”. The goldfish often becomes the “jin-yu-man-tang (wealthy)” composition with the assonance of “jin-yu (gold and jade)”. 
2. Carp: About the legend of the carp, the most well-known one is the story of “the carp jumps dragon gate”. Consequently, people likened this metaphor to the meaning of “ji-di (pass an imperial examination)”; in addition, the “li” word in carp has the same sound of the “li (profit)” word, it’s the meaning of gaining profit (fig.7).
3. Shrimp: The waist of the shrimp presents an armor shape, and can be crooked freely, and there is strength of beating greatly, so the implied meaning is smooth with experiencing a spell of good fortune. Shrimp, the like of crab, the aquatic organism, has carapace. The imperial examination system of Ming and Qing Dynasties, through after the supreme final imperial examination, and then divide grades three, is called “san-jia”. Every “jia” chooses the best of three, is called “zhuang-yuan (the first)”, “bang-yan (second place)”, “tan-hua (third place)”. Shrimp and crab are guided and explained for the scholarly honor of official rank on the officialdom.

4.2.4 Insects
1. Butterfly: The butterfly is beautiful in color, often flies swiftly among flowering shrubs, can give people an aesthetic feeling. “Erya shiyan” records: “People who is eighty years old mean longevity.” The “die” sound of the butterfly and “die (longevity)” are unisonous; there is meaning of longevity.

4. Conclusion
The roof of the Chinese traditional architecture in people’s mind can be regarded as the first impression of traditional building. Compared the room body with the base in the building, roof has occupied the largest visual area and it’s also the most eye-catching. It has a symbol meaning of the grade position, besides the function of keeping out wind and rain. So, no matter how superficial characteristics of the position or visual effect, the ornament on the roof can not be too indiscreet and negligent. The early immigrants of mainland move to Taiwan, who pay attention to the ornamental idea of the roof, also influence Taiwan; through development and changes of the times, produced a lot of special practices and subject matter. Today, we pay more attention to Taiwan native culture; all these are worth to go deep into our discussion. Animal's model appears in the ornamental scene of the roof long ago. From the both sides' chi-wei on the early wu-ji to the celestial being and beast of the four corners’ jiao-ji, after lots and lots of years of development, , the animal from the auspicious beast of gods in the legend to the real world, is rich and varied gradually. No matter the animal is from the legend or true, all these have explained that culture impacts on folk art and brings abundant folk culture subject matter to us.

5. reference