

Artistic Characteristics and Cultural Symbols of Decorative Carving Patterns of Folk Houses in Anshun Traditional Villages

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Abstract: This study focuses on the decorative carving patterns of residential buildings in traditional villages in Anshun area, and explores their artistic characteristics and cultural symbolism through field research and literature analysis. It is found that the decorative carving patterns of folk houses in Anshun show rich diversity in pattern types, artistic expression methods and aesthetic features, reflecting the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, the pursuit of auspicious symbols, the identification of social status and the respect of religious beliefs. Patterns are not only the embodiment of architectural aesthetics, but also a symbol of local cultural traditions and social values. Its socio-cultural functions include cultural heritage, identity marking, education and indoctrination, religious expression and community cohesion strengthening. The study reveals the unique cultural landscape of Anshun area, emphasizes the importance of protecting and inheriting these cultural heritages, and provides theoretical support for the organic combination of tradition and modernity. Future research could expand the scope and delve into the craft of pattern making and its preservation and adaptive use in modern society.

Keywords: Anshun Traditional Villages, Residential Architecture, Decorative Carvings, Artistic Features, Cultural Symbols.

1. Introduction

Located in Guizhou Province of China, Anshun region is famous for its unique geographical environment and rich ethnic culture. As an important part of cultural heritage, traditional villages carry profound historical information and cultural characteristics. The architecture of traditional village houses in Anshun not only has distinctive regional characteristics in terms of structure and materials, but its decorative carving patterns also reflect deep cultural heritage and artistic value. However, with the acceleration of modernization, these traditional buildings and their decorative arts are facing the risk of being marginalized or even disappearing. Therefore, it is urgent to study the decorative carving patterns of these buildings. The purpose of this study is to systematically analyze the artistic characteristics of the decorative carving patterns of residential buildings in traditional villages in Anshun and to explore their deeper cultural symbolism. Through in-depth analysis of the types of patterns, artistic expressions and aesthetic features, the study reveals their important roles in cultural inheritance, social functions and religious beliefs. The scope of the study is limited to 10 representative villages in Anshun that are listed in the Chinese Traditional Villages Directory, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for the conservation of traditional residential architecture, provide inspiration for modern architectural design, and promote the awareness of and respect for local cultural diversity.

2. Literature Overview

2.1. Research on Traditional Residential Architecture

As an important carrier of human dwelling culture, traditional residential architecture has always been a hot field of interdisciplinary research. (Lu Lu, Wang Guiru, 2024) In

addition to the functionality and adaptability of the architecture, the decorative art of residential architecture has received equal attention from researchers. (Zhang Weiyi, 2024)(Yuan Lingyuan, 2024) Decorative art not only shows the aesthetic interest of the residents, but also is an expression of culture and identity. In different cultural contexts, the subjects, styles and techniques of residential decorative arts vary, and they may contain religious symbols, mythological stories, natural landscapes or scenes of daily life, reflecting the social status, religious beliefs and values of the occupants. (Ma Shuyi, 2024) (Zhu Jianqiang, 2024)

With the process of globalization and social modernization, traditional residential buildings are facing the dual challenges of preservation and development (Yang Shenghong, 2024) (Yao Yuan et al. 2021). On the one hand, how to effectively protect and pass on these precious cultural heritages, and on the other hand, how to adapt them to the needs of modern life has become a common concern for researchers and practitioners. (Li Wenzhao, 2024,)

2.2. An Artistic Study of Decorative Sculptural Patterns

As an important part of architectural decoration, the artistic study of decorative carving patterns focuses on the design principles, formal language and aesthetic value of patterns. Researchers have analyzed the development of motifs in different cultures and historical periods, and explored the links between motifs and religious beliefs, social hierarchies, and national identity. In the study of art history, the style, subject matter, and production techniques of decorative patterns have been used to trace cultural exchanges and the evolution of artistic styles.

Decorative sculptural patterns, as the shared language of global architectural decoration, are not only a means of aesthetic expression, but also a carrier of cultural and historical information. Artistic research in this field focuses

on the principles of pattern design, formal language and aesthetic value, and in the information age, changes in the media have led to constant innovation in composition and creative expression as a future trend.(Cai Yanan,2022) Together, these elements constitute the global characteristics of pattern art.

Diversity of aesthetic value. The study of aesthetic value, on the other hand, presents the different understanding and pursuit of beauty in different cultures. In some cultures, the aesthetic value of tattoos is closely related to their symbolic meaning and social function, while in other cultures, more attention may be paid to the decorative and visual impact of tattoos. (Li, Y. 2015)

Pattern Innovation in Modern Context. With the process of globalization and social modernization, traditional patterns are facing the dual challenges of innovation and preservation. Modern designers and artists have revitalized traditional patterns in contemporary art and design by reinterpreting and recreating them. (Davis, F. 2018)

2.3. Current Status of Research in the Anshun Area

Although there is not much literature on the study of decorative carving patterns of traditional village houses architecture in Anshun area, the existing studies provide us with valuable information and insights. (Zhao Xuezhu,2022) Existing literature focuses on overview descriptions of traditional villages in Anshun and individual case studies, such as explorations of Tunbao architecture.(Song Jiahui et al.2024) These studies provide a basis for our understanding of the basic features of traditional architecture in the Anshun region. However, systematic research on the artistic features and cultural symbols of decorative carving patterns is still insufficient, which indicates that there is still a large space and need for research in this field.

With the development of society and the change of life style, the residential architecture in Anshun area does face the problem of conflict and integration between tradition and modernity. This phenomenon provides new perspectives and challenges for research, and the balance between the protection of traditional architecture and the needs of modern design is a key issue in current research and practice. How to protect traditional architectural features while adapting them to the needs of modern life is a common concern for researchers and practitioners.

Combined with the above literature shows that the current situation of the research on decorative carving patterns of residential architecture in traditional villages in Anshun area indicates that although there have been some basic work, systematic and in-depth research is still insufficient, especially in the area of artistic features and cultural symbols]. Meanwhile, the problem of conflict and integration between tradition and modernity provides new perspectives and challenges for research in this field. Future research needs to pay more attention to these aspects in order to promote the study and inheritance of traditional architectural culture in Anshun area.

3. Overview of Traditional Villages and Residential Buildings in Anshun

3.1. The Village Environment and the Formation of Residential Architecture

Anshun City, located on the eastern edge of the Yunnan-

Guizhou Plateau, is characterized by peaks and rolling hills, and enjoys a humid subtropical climate with mild weather and abundant precipitation. This unique natural environment has given birth to the intermingling of multiple ethnic cultures and the evolution of diverse lifestyles. Historically, Anshun has been a hotbed of multi-ethnicity, especially the Han, Miao, Buyi and other ethnic groups, which has promoted cultural exchanges and integration, and nurtured the unique cultural landscape of the region.

As the hinterland of the ancient Yelang Kingdom, Anshun has witnessed the precipitation of history through the change of dynasties, leaving behind a rich cultural heritage. In the Ming Dynasty, due to the need for military defense, the Tunbu was built in Anshun, and these buildings not only played a role in defense in history, but also in the process of the evolution of the architectural style and functionality of the Tunbu to resolve the spatial transformation of the Tunbu as an epiphenomenon (Song Jahui et al., 2024). Its unique architectural style has also become a representative of the outstanding residential architecture, which carries far-reaching historical significance and cultural value.

3.2. Village Distribution and Architectural Features

Traditional villages in Anshun are dotted among the mountains and hills, forming a harmonious ecological picture with the surrounding natural environment. Most of these villages follow the geographic wisdom of the ancients and are built along the foothills and waterfronts, which not only conforms to the natural topography, but also facilitates the utilization of natural resources.

The traditional residential buildings in Anshun are famous for their unique style and structure. They usually use building materials and techniques adapted to local climatic and geographical conditions, such as stone and wood, demonstrating a deep understanding and utilization of the environment. The decorative arts of architecture, such as wood and stone carvings, not only beautify the living space, but also convey rich cultural symbols and aesthetic pursuits. These villages and residential buildings are not only the carriers of the history and culture of Anshun area, but also the vivid display of national wisdom and lifestyle.

Table 1. Characteristics of traditional residential architecture in Anshun area

| number | Featured | Content |
|--------|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Structural Layout | Typified by the courtyard layout, such as triple and quadruple courtyards, i.e. optimized ventilation and lighting conditions. |
| 2 | Building Materials | Stone is widely used in residential buildings, resulting in characteristic building forms such as stone walls and slate roofs. |
| 3 | Decorative Arts | The motifs on the exquisite wood and stone carvings are often inspired by natural elements and ethnic totems. |
| 4 | Defense Function | The towers and walls of the residential buildings reflect only the importance of military needs versus the security of the inhabitants' lives. |

The traditional villages and residential buildings in Anshun are not only the witnesses of history, but also the crystallization of multi-ethnic cultural fusion. They carry rich

historical information, cultural value and artistic beauty. Therefore, the protection and research of these traditional villages and residential buildings are of inestimable importance to the maintenance of cultural diversity and the inheritance of local culture and spirit. The characteristics of traditional residential architecture in Anshun area are mainly reflected in the following aspects.

4. Artistic Characterization of Decorative Carving Patterns

The traditional residential architecture of Anshun region has unique artistic characteristics of decorative carving patterns, which are particularly evident in the types of patterns, artistic expression methods and aesthetic characteristics.

4.1. Pattern Types and Forms

There are rich types of decorative patterns for residential houses in Anshun area, and the common ones are geometric patterns, animal and plant patterns, and character patterns, etc. These patterns are not only diversified in form, but also have different cultural connotations. These patterns are not only diversified in form, but also unique in cultural connotation. Geometric patterns are composed of simple lines and shapes, reflecting the beauty of symmetry and balance; animal and plant patterns are mostly taken from nature, such as lotus, dragon, phoenix, etc., which symbolize good luck and wealth;

character patterns mostly reflect historical stories or folklore, and have high artistic and cultural value. (CHEN Li. 2019)

4.2. Artistic Expression

The decorative carving art of Anshun houses is characterized by a variety of techniques, including relief carving, circular carving and perspective carving. These techniques are widely used on different architectural components, such as doors and windows, beams and pillars, eaves and so on. The carving techniques are exquisite, with smooth lines and vivid images, showing the high skills of the craftsmen. Especially in the detailing, such as the facial expression of the characters and the folds of the costumes, they are shown in a very delicate and realistic way. (CHEN Li. 2019)

4.3. Esthetic Quality

The artistic characteristics of decorative carving patterns in traditional residential architecture in the Anshun region are multifaceted. They are not only diverse in form but also exquisite and delicate in artistic expression, embodying profound cultural connotations and the spirit of the times in their aesthetic features. These characteristics collectively contribute to the unique artistic charm of the decorative carving patterns in Anshun's traditional residences. The aesthetic features of these carving patterns are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

Table 2. Aesthetic Characteristics of Decorative Carving Patterns of Traditional Houses in Anshun

| number | Featured | Content |
|--------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | Structural Layout | The pattern is harmonized with the overall style of the building, which not only highlights the artistry of the decoration, but is not overly ostentatious, maintaining the solemnity and elegance of the building. |
| 2 | Building Materials | The pattern design is rich in symbolism, such as the bat symbolizing good fortune and the lotus flower symbolizing purity, reflecting people's desire and pursuit of a better life. |
| 3 | Decorative Arts | Patterns in both form and content reflect the regional characteristics and ethnic flavor of Anshun area, such as the Miao's silver pattern, the Bouyi's brocade pattern and so on. |
| 4 | Defense Function | Although the patterns are inherited and developed on the basis of tradition, they also incorporate the aesthetic elements of the new era, showing a perfect combination of tradition and modernity. |

5. Cultural Symbolism and Social Meaning in Patterns

Cultural symbols and social significance are indispensable elements in the decorative carving patterns of traditional residential buildings in Anshun area. The following is an analysis of the cultural symbols, socio-cultural functions, and embodiment of religion and beliefs in the patterns.

5.1. Symbolism of Patterns

Anshun area traditional residential architecture carving pattern is the mirror of local culture and history, with auspicious patterns and other diverse forms, to convey the pursuit of harmony and prosperity and other life prayers, reflecting the concept of symbiosis between man and nature, mapping the status of the residents of the wealth, carrying the memory of ancestors and respect for tradition, religious beliefs enrich its connotation, is the connection between the ancient and modern, traditional and modern cultural ties:

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5.2. Socio-cultural Function

The carving pattern of traditional residential buildings in Anshun area is of great significance, which is a medium of cultural inheritance, symbolizes social status, serves as a tool for education and moral education, shows aesthetic value, strengthens community cohesion and identity, and carries the historical memory of the area, etc., and plays an important role in maintaining cultural diversity and social harmony. It has the following functions:

Table 4. The Social and Cultural Functions of the Carving Patterns of Traditional Folk Houses and Buildings

| number | Featured | Content |
|--------|------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Cultural Heritage | As part of the cultural heritage, patterns reflect the historical development of the region and its national characteristics. |
| 2 | Social Identity | Specific patterns can serve as symbols of social stratification and status. |
| 3 | Education and Indoctrination | The stories and symbolism in the motifs play a role in educating the younger generation, conveying moral codes and life wisdom. |
| 4 | Aesthetic and artistic value | The design and craftsmanship of the patterns show the aesthetic interest and artistic creativity of the local people. |

5.3. Embodiment of Religion and Belief

The carving patterns of traditional residential buildings in the Anshun area incorporate Buddhist and Taoist symbols and deity worship patterns such as lotus flowers, bagua, and door gods, reflecting reverence for the gods and prayers for peace and good fortune. There are also elements of ancestor remembrance and feng shui beliefs, reflecting respect for the family and nature, and mapping the spiritual world and cultural traditions of local residents:

Table 5. Religion and Faith in Traditional Folk Architectural Carving Patterns

| number | Featured | Content |
|--------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Religious symbols | Religious elements, such as the lotus flower, are incorporated into the motifs to symbolize religious beliefs and veneration of the gods. |
| 2 | Spirit Worship | The God of Door and the God of Wealth are used to pray for peace, wealth and good fortune, reflecting the folk worship of and reliance on the gods. |
| 3 | Ancestor Memorial | The remembrance of ancestors in the pattern expresses respect for the family lineage and reflects the cultural value of honoring ancestors. |
| 4 | Spiritual Sustenance | In the face of life's uncertainties, the religious and faith-based elements of the tattoo provide spiritual solace and support to the inhabitants. |

The decorative carving patterns of traditional residential buildings in Anshun area are not only the expression of aesthetics, but also an important carrier of cultural, social and religious beliefs. Traditional residential architectural decorative carving patterns are important expressions of local

culture, which not only beautify the living environment, but also convey rich cultural information and profound social significance. Through in-depth analysis of these patterns, we can better understand the values, lifestyles and spiritual world of local residents, as well as the cultural traditions and social values of the Anshun region. Protecting and handing down these patterns is of great significance in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting cultural exchanges.

6. Conclusion

This study comprehensively analyzes the decorative carving patterns of residential buildings in traditional villages in Anshun. It is rich in artistic features, covering a wide range of types, techniques and aesthetics, which not only demonstrates architectural aesthetics, but also symbolizes the deep cultural traditions and social values of the local community, and contributes to the understanding of the history and culture of Anshun. However, there are limitations in the study, as it focuses on more than ten villages in a specific area and does not sufficiently explore the production process. Future research could expand the scope and explore the process in depth, while focusing on the protection and inheritance of traditional patterns, their revitalization and utilization, and their integration with modern design under the impact of modernization.

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