

A Cultural Study of The Roof Beast in Traditional Chinese Ancient Architecture

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Abstract: Chinese traditional ancient architecture is an important part of Chinese ancient culture, and its architectural style is unique and exquisite. The roof beast is a kind of decorative element in traditional ancient architecture, its meaning is rich and far-reaching. The purpose of this paper is to explore the origin, evolution and cultural connotation of the roof ridge beast in traditional Chinese ancient architecture through the cultural research, and further deepen the understanding and understanding of ancient Chinese culture.

Keywords: Chinese traditional ancient architecture, Roof beast, Cultural research, Origin, Evolution, Cultural connotation.

1. Definition and Classification of Rotunda

1.1. Definition of roof beast

Roof animal in traditional Chinese ancient architecture refers to the stone or wood animal image located above the roof ridge of the building, which is usually used for decoration and warding off evil spirits. The roof beast has important symbolic significance in ancient Chinese architecture, which is believed to be able to ward off evil spirits and protect houses and residents. According to the different images and characteristics, the roof can be divided into the following main types:

1. Lion: The lion is one of the most common roof animals and is considered to have a powerful and brave image, which can protect the house from evil spirits and demons. The common lion roof ridge animal has the form of pan lion, hug lion, leap lion and so on.

2. Kirin: The Kirin is a lucky animal in traditional Chinese culture, which is believed to represent luck and happiness. The unicorn usually has a head, antlers, ox body, lion's foot or some other strange image.

3. Dragon: The dragon is regarded as the supreme deity in Chinese culture, symbolizing imperial power and power. The dragon roof ridge beast is mostly the image of the dragon with strong expression and flying clouds.

4. Phoenix: Phoenix in traditional Chinese culture symbolizes luck, beauty and rebirth. Phoenix-like rotors are often dominated by two phoenixes looking at each other or flying.

In addition to the above common types of roof animals, there are some other images, such as turtles, snakes, peacocks, etc., which can also be used as decorative images of roof animals in traditional Chinese ancient buildings. It should be noted that there may be slight differences and special images of roof animals in ancient buildings in different regions and different historical periods, so this is only a general classification and description, and specific circumstances may vary.

1.1.1. The concept and meaning of the roof beast

Roof beast is a traditional Chinese architectural decoration element, referring to the stone or wood carved animal figure

located above the roof ridge of a building. They are placed at the top of the ridge, used to decorate the ridge lines of the building, and have a certain symbolic significance. The roof beast played an important role in ancient Chinese architecture and has several main concepts and meanings:

1. Warding off evil spirits: The roof beast is believed to have the ability to drive away evil spirits and protect the house from disasters and evil forces. They are regarded as guardian gods, protecting against disease, bad luck and disaster, and bringing peace and good fortune to the house and its inhabitants.

2. Symbol of auspiciousness: In traditional Chinese culture, animal images are often endowed with auspicious and auspicious meanings. The image of the roof animal is diverse, such as lion, unicorn, dragon, phoenix, etc., they represent the positive meaning of auspice, happiness, power and imperial power.

3. Decoration and beautification: The roof beast, as an architectural decorative element, plays a role in decorating and beautifying the appearance of the building. With exquisite craftsmanship and carving, they give the building a unique artistic atmosphere and enrich the visual effect of the building.

4. Cultural inheritance: As a unique element of traditional Chinese architecture, the roof beast represents the inheritance of ancient Chinese architectural art and culture. They reflect the aesthetic concepts and values of ancient Chinese people and are an important part of Chinese civilization.

In general, the roof beast has the functions of decoration, symbol and guardian in traditional Chinese architecture, which not only shows artistic beauty, but also contains rich cultural connotation. They played an important role in ancient architecture and are still preserved and passed down in some traditional buildings today.

1.1.2. The artistic characteristics and forms of expression of the roof beast

The artistic features and forms of expression of the roof beast in the traditional Chinese architecture are various, with certain regional and historical style characteristics. Here are some common artistic features and expressions of the roof beast:

1. Fierce expression: The roof beast is often designed as an image of fierce expression, with a sense of dominancy and power. They usually roar with open mouth, dragon mouth

open, lion staring ahead, etc., the form is fierce and powerful, highlighting their protective and deterrent role.

2. Fine carving: The production of roof ridge beast requires superb carving technology and skills. Whether it is stone carving or wood carving, the pursuit of delicate and fine carving skills to show the various details and textures of the animal image, so that the image of the roof animal more vivid and lifelike.

3. Colorful: Some roof animals will be carefully colored, using bright, bright color decoration to add artistic effect. The use of color can help highlight the characteristics and image of the roof beast, making it more eye-catching.

4. Rich variety: the roof ridge beast has a high space for modeling creation, and can be the image of various animals, such as lion, unicorn, dragon, phoenix, peacock, snake, etc. Different regions, different traditional cultures and belief systems may have unique images of roof animals, presenting a rich variety of artistic styles.

5. Symbolic meaning: The image design of the roof animal often has symbolic meaning, representing the positive meaning of luck, power, auspicious, happiness and so on. The moral and symbolic meanings represented by different roof animals may also be different due to the characteristics of their animal images.

These artistic features and forms of expression are the common features of the roof beast in traditional Chinese architecture. However, due to different regions, different historical periods and different architectural styles, the specific forms of expression of the roof beast may be different. Therefore, in specific architectural works, the artistic characteristics and forms of expression of the roof beast may have a more unique presentation.

1.2. Classification of rostral beasts

1.2.1. Animal image like roof beast

Animal image-like rostron refers to those rostron animals that are designed and represented based on animal images. In traditional Chinese architecture, animal images are often used as the main form of expression of roof animals. The following are some common animal images like roof animals:

1. Lion: The lion is one of the most common animal images. The lion is regarded as a symbol of holiness and majesty in Chinese culture, with the role of protecting the law and driving away evil spirits. The lion on the roof usually has a mane, sharp teeth, and an open mouth, and can appear alone or in pairs.

2. Kirin: Kirin is also one of the common animal images. In traditional Chinese culture, the kirin is considered a symbol of auspiciousness, happiness and power. The image of Kylin often has a dragon head, antlers, ox body, lion feet and other strange features, elegant and solemn shape.

3. Dragon: The dragon has a special status in Chinese culture, symbolizing power, honor and divine power. In the roof beast, the dragon image often has features such as winding body, dragon head and claw, showing the majesty and mystery of the dragon.

4. Phoenix: Phoenix is a lucky bird in Chinese culture, symbolizing rebirth, beauty and luck. In the roof beast, the image of the phoenix often appears in the posture of flying and spreading its wings to move, showing the elegance and mystery of the phoenix.

In addition to the above common animal images, there are some other animal images such as turtles, snakes, peacocks, etc., which can also be used as decorative images on the roof.

These animal figures, like roof animals, play the dual role of decoration and symbol in traditional Chinese architecture, and also demonstrate the reverence and reverence for animals in ancient China.

1.2.2. Character image like roof beast

The character image type roof beast refers to the roof beast which is designed and expressed based on the character image. In traditional Chinese architecture, in addition to animal images, human images are often used as one of the forms of expression of roof animals. Here are some common figures like the roof beast:

1. Civil servants and generals: The image of civil servants and armed generals in Chinese clothes is often seen in the roof beast. Civil officials usually wear traditional official clothes, high crown, big sleeves, serious and solemn; The image of a martial general usually wears a helmet, wears a armor, and holds a sword, showing martial courage.

2. Immortals: There are often some images of immortals and immortals in the roof beast, and these images usually have otherworldly characteristics. They may be dressed in robes, hold sacred artifacts, or sit on auspicious clouds, showing immortals and mystery.

3. Historical figures: Some well-known historical figures are often used as the image of the roof beast, such as Confucius, Sun Yat-sen, Zhuge Liang and so on. These images are usually represented by their characteristic features and costumes, showing respect and remembrance of historical figures.

4. Mythological characters: Some mythological characters can also become the image of the roof beast, such as Nuwa, Na Zha, Guanyin and so on. These figures often have supernatural powers and mysterious appearances, symbolizing fairy figures in mythology and legends.

The figure of the beast is not only a decorative element, but also has a certain symbolic significance and historical and cultural connotation. Through the shaping of images, they show the reverence and admiration for the characters in ancient Chinese culture, and at the same time give a unique humanistic color to the architecture.

1.2.3. The image of the god beast is like the roof beast

God beast image class roof beast refers to the roof beast based on the design and performance of God beast. In traditional Chinese architecture, the image of the divine beast is often used as one of the manifestations of the roof beast. The following are some common images of the divine beast like the roof beast:

1. Kirin: The Kirin is a lucky animal in traditional Chinese culture, believed to bring good luck and happiness. The kylin on the roof ridge is usually an elegant, scaly animal with strange features such as antlers, lion pincers, and ox bodies, representing luck and power.

2. Dragon: The dragon has a special status in Chinese culture and is regarded as a symbol of holiness and power. The dragons on the roof ridges are often designed as sinuous, scaly dragons, displaying qualities of mystery, majesty and power.

3. Phoenix: Phoenix is an auspicious bird in Chinese culture, representing rebirth, beauty and happiness. The phoenix on the roof ridge often appears in elegant flight, they have gorgeous feathers, wings to move posture, symbolizing luck and auspiciousity.

4. White Tiger: The white tiger is one of the four gods of traditional Chinese animals and is regarded as a guardian animal. The white tiger on the roof is usually a powerful and

majestic tiger, symbolizing authority and protection.

5. Qiongqi: Qiongqi is one of the traditional Chinese gods. It is often described as having the appearance of a benevolent person and the shape of a bird, with the body of a lion and the face of a unicorn. The poor and strange on the ridge are often used to ward off evil spirits and have the function of exorcising evil spirits and guarding them.

These images of gods and animals, like roof animals, played the dual role of decoration and symbol in architecture. They not only add to the artistic beauty of the building, but also convey people's desire and belief in auspiciousness, auspiciousness and protection. At the same time, these images of gods and beasts highlight the pursuit and worship of gods and divinity in traditional Chinese culture.

2. The Origin and Evolution of Rotunda

2.1. Origin of the roof beast

The use of roof animals in traditional Chinese architecture can be traced back to ancient times. They originated from the ancient Chinese worship and belief in gods, protection and protection. In ancient Chinese religion and philosophy, deities were considered to be the bridge between nature and humans, as well as the maintainer of the order of the universe. In order to get the blessing of the gods, people put the roof beast in the building as a symbol and representative. The earliest roof animals mainly used animal images, such as lions, tigers, dragons and so on. These animals are regarded as divine or protective figures, and by being placed on the ridge of the roof, they act as guardians, exorcises and protecters. With the passage of time and the development of society, the image of the roof beast has gradually diversified and enriched. In the Tang and Song dynasties, the spread and development of Buddhism in China had an important impact on the image of the roof beast. There are many images of gods and beasts in Buddhism, such as kirin, phoenix, lion, etc. These images have been gradually incorporated into the design of roof beasts, making the types of roof beasts more diversified.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, palaces, temples and temples were built on a larger scale, and the number and variety of roof animals further increased. At this time, the roof beast gradually became a unique decorative element in the building, which not only has practical functions, but also reflects the architectural taste and cultural connotation. Since the 20th century, with the rise of modern architecture and the change of cultural concepts, the use and performance of roof beast in architecture have also changed. While the traditional roof beast is still widely used, many modern styles and innovative roof decorations have also emerged. These new forms of the roof beast may combine traditional and modern elements to be displayed in a more diverse and personalized way.

In general, the origin of the roof beast can be traced back to the ancient belief and worship, with the passage of time and the development of culture, the image of the roof beast gradually enriched, becoming one of the important decorative elements of traditional Chinese architecture. They not only have the function of decoration, but also the desire and pursuit of people for auspiciousness, protection and mysterious power.

2.1.1. Religious beliefs and the origin of the roof beast

Religious beliefs are closely linked to the origin of the roof beast. The use of the roof beast in traditional Chinese

architecture originated from ancient people's belief in gods, protection and protection. The following will focus on the influence of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk beliefs on the origin of the roof beast.

1. Buddhism: Buddhism is one of the major religions in ancient China. When it was first introduced into China, many Buddhist buildings adopted the Indian Buddhist architectural style. In Buddhism, there are many images of divine beasts, such as kirin, lion, phoenix, etc., which are regarded as the images of dharma gods or Bodhisattvas. With the development of Buddhism in China, the images of these gods were gradually integrated into the design of the roof beast and became the decorative elements of the roof.

2. Taoism: Taoism also had an impact on the origin of the roof beast. There are many images of gods and beasts in Taoism, such as immortals, mountain gods, poor and strange. These gods and beasts were regarded as beings with supernatural powers and protective functions, so their images were also incorporated into the roof beast to symbolize the power and magic of Taoist beliefs.

3. Folk beliefs: In addition to official religions, Chinese folk beliefs also have an impact on the image of the roof beast. In traditional Chinese folk beliefs, people generally worship the images of natural gods, earth gods, ancestors and various gods and monsters. These images of gods and monsters are also often used as the design of the roof beast to protect and bless the meaning.

Overall, religious beliefs had a profound influence on the origin of the roof beast. The images of gods and beasts in Buddhism, Taoism and folk beliefs are incorporated into the roof beast, symbolizing the power of holiness, protection and protection. As a decorative element of architecture, the roof beast not only reflects the reverence and awe of religious belief, but also harbors people's piety and hope. At the same time, it has become a unique form of expression in traditional Chinese architectural culture, showing the close connection between architecture and faith.

2.1.2. Ancient myths and legends and the origin of the roof beast

Ancient myths and legends also played an important role in the origin of the roof beast. In ancient Chinese myths and legends, there are many images of gods and monsters, and these images are also used in the design of roof beasts. Here are some examples of ancient myths and legends associated with the origin of the roof beast:

1. Dragon: The dragon is regarded as one of the most sacred gods in Chinese culture, representing power, strength and good luck. According to ancient legend, dragons are the descendants of the gods, able to manipulate wind and rain and control waters. Therefore, among the Chinese roof animals, the dragon is one of the most common figures, characterized by its sinuous and undulating body, curly beard, and scaly armor.

2. Phoenix: The phoenix is a bird of auspiciousness in Chinese mythology and is regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness, beauty and happiness. According to legend, the phoenix can sing and dance well and fly in the sky, which is a symbol of good luck and wealth. Therefore, the phoenix has also become one of the common images of the roof beast, representing luck and glory.

3. White Tiger: The white tiger is one of the four gods in traditional Chinese mythology and is regarded as a guardian animal and a god of protection. The white tiger symbolizes the divine power and protective function. Among the ancient

roof animals, the white tiger often appeared with the image of power and grandeur, and was a symbol of guard and watch.

4. Kirin: The Kirin is a lucky animal in traditional Chinese culture, believed to bring good luck and happiness. Some are shaped like the hoof of a horse, and some are characterized by the unicorn's single horn. In the design of the roof beast, the unicorn is often depicted as a gorgeous and peaceful image, symbolizing luck and power.

These images of gods in ancient myths and legends became the source of inspiration for the design of the roof beast, showing people's worship and pursuit of the sacred, auspicious and mysterious power. At the same time, these myths and legends also give the roof ridge beast a deeper meaning and symbol, making it an indispensable part of traditional Chinese architectural culture.

2.2. Evolution of the roof beast

2.2.1. Evolution of the roof beast

The evolution of the rotunda can be divided into the following stages:

1. Early stage: In the early stage of ancient Chinese architecture, the image of the roof beast was mainly based on animals, such as lions and tigers. These animals are believed to have divine powers and to protect buildings and their inhabitants.

2. Stages of Buddhist influence: With the spread and development of Buddhism in China, Buddhist architecture had an important impact on the image of the roof beast. There are many images of gods and beasts in Buddhism, such as the unicorn, the lion, and the elephant. The images of these gods were incorporated into the design of the roof beast, making the types of the roof beast more diverse.

3. Stages of development in the Song and Ming Dynasties: In the Song and Ming dynasties, palaces, temples and temples were built on a larger scale, and the number and types of roof animals further increased. At the same time, the image of the roof beast has become more delicate and delicate, with higher artistic.

4. Prosperous stage of the Qianlong Period: During the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, the design of the roof ridge beast reached a very high artistic level. The image of the roof beast is more delicate and plump, and it is used to decorate the roof ridges of palaces and temples.

5. Modern evolution stage: With the rise of modern architecture and the change of cultural concepts, the form and style of roof decoration have also undergone certain changes. The modern roof beast may combine traditional and modern elements to present in a more diverse and personalized way.

In general, the evolution of the roof beast was influenced by religious, cultural and artistic factors at different times. From the initial animal image to the influence of Buddhism, myths and legends, as well as modern integration and innovation, the image and style of the roof beast have gradually diversified and become an important part of Chinese architectural culture.

2.2.2. The geographical difference of the roof beast

There may be some differences in different regions of China, mainly because each region has different regional characteristics, cultural traditions and artistic styles. Here are some examples of regional differences:

1. North and South: Due to the differences in climate environment and cultural traditions between the north and the

South, roof animals may be different in these two regions. The roof beast in the northern region is often strong and powerful, concise in image, and pays attention to expression and power. Roof animals in the southern region are often more detailed, ornate, full of decorative and artistic.

2. Jiangnan Water and mountain areas: China's Jiangnan water and mountain areas also had an impact on the style of the roof ridge beast. The roof animals in the Jiangnan water area are usually varied, with aquatic creatures and plants as the theme, such as lotus, fish, frog, etc. A roof animal in a mountainous region may feature an imaginary mountain animal or an imaginary mountain god such as a bear.

3. Ethnic areas: The roof animals in China's ethnic minority areas also have unique characteristics. For example, in the traditional architecture of the Tibetan and Yi ethnic groups in the southwest, the roof beast is often themed with the image of a unicorn, a stag and other divine beasts, implying good luck and protection.

These differences are due to the influence of different geographical environments, national cultures and artistic styles, which make the roof animals in different places have regional characteristics and unique expressions. This is also the embodiment of the rich diversity and regional differences of Chinese traditional architectural culture.

3. Conclusion

The cultural research of the roof beast in traditional Chinese ancient architecture presents many main aspects. From the perspectives of religion and belief, myth and legend, art and sculpture, social and political significance, and regional and regional differences, we can deeply understand the rich connotation of traditional Chinese architectural culture. The image and allegorical meaning of the roof beast show the development and change of ancient religious beliefs, the symbolic meaning of mythological stories, the development and creative skills of ancient architectural art, the influence of social and political contexts, and the relationship between regional culture and architecture. This kind of research is of great significance for inheriting and protecting Chinese traditional architectural culture and promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

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