

Development and Evolution of Tuanhua Medallion Patterns in China

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Abstract: Tuanhua Medallion Pattern is a traditional Chinese pattern still used today. This article aims to complete a deep understanding and understanding of the structure and moral evolution of the Tuanhua Medallion Patterns in different periods. The birth of Tuanhua Medallion Patterns records people's pursuit of life and even spirit and can also reflect people's other life concepts, aesthetic characteristics, and social styles at that time.

1. Characteristics and Implications of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern

"Tuanhua Medallion Pattern is a circular decorative pattern that radiates or rotates around it. It has a long history and is widely used." In the Dictionary of Chinese Patterns, "Tuanhua" refers to a decorative pattern with a circular outer outline. Those with complex structures and large circular diameters are referred to as "large Tuanhua"; those with simple forms and small circular diameters are referred to as "small Tuanhua", and the latter is referred to as a leather ball flower.^[1] One of the essential characteristics of Tuanhua is that a circular solid line bounds the outer outline, and the middle is decorated with a pattern. At the same time, the other refers to a practice whose exterior design is not bounded by a solid line but is visually similar to a circle.

The presentation of auspicious meanings in different decorative forms is also a significant feature of China's traditional culture. The structure of Tuanhua decorative patterns not only reflects the common pursuit of "Tuanhua" advocated by people but also gives a more profound cultural connotation to China's traditional auspicious designs. It is to hide the auspicious meanings in objects, characters, or patterns and use tangible objects, patterns, shapes, etc., to express an intangible yearning for and belief in the concept of encouraging. To a large extent, it reflects the customs, aesthetic tastes, and cultural features of people at that time.^[2] From the perspective of aesthetic needs and popular trends in today's society, the ingenious application of traditional auspicious culture in modern textile design in the form of the Tuanhua Medallion Patterns, as well as the exploration of methods for the deformation and design of bright prints in practice, is the best embodiment of exploring more possibilities for the inheritance and derivation of Tuanhua Medallion Patterns.

2. The Early Formation of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern

The pattern composition form based on the circular pattern has a native origin in China since

ancient times. The initial budding image of the flower pattern can be traced back to primitive society when there was a circular textile tool called a spinning wheel. The concentric rings on the spinning wheel can also be seen as the initial basic outline of the latest flower pattern. This point should be easy to understand from the perspective of the circular patterns on Shang and Zhou bronze wares and the circular composition of Qin and Han tiles. As early as the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, when the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern originated, there was a decorative technique of using circles, squares, or rhombus to form a geometric skeleton and then filling it with animal or plant flower and leaf patterns. [3]Artisans integrated the Hu and Han cultures, cleverly combining the outer ring form of the Persian joint bead pattern with traditional bird, animal, and flower patterns. This is a Tuanhua Medallion Pattern that has been easily formed. To a certain extent, it was also influenced by Buddhist culture. Therefore, Buddhism is perfectly dignified, orderly, stable, and orderly. Lotus patterns with a sense of strict order often appear in the patterns. The Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang were built in this period, and many flower patterns were used for the caisson decoration of Buddhist buildings. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Tuanhua Medallion Pattern of Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties

3. The Prosperous Period of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern

3.1 Tuanhua Medallion Pattern in Tang and Song Dynasties

Although the early Tuanhua Medallion Pattern has been widely used in architecture, utensil decoration, and other materials, it has become increasingly known as a pattern on clothing and other fabrics since the Tang Dynasty. The design of Tuanhua Medallion Pattern on the dress was once one of the iconic patterns of the upper class. In ancient class and clothing systems, the size of Tuanhua Medallion Pattern was also clearly distinguished. For example, the overall style of the Tang Dynasty regimental pattern is atmospheric and vigorous, with a complete image. The design tends to be simple and abstract, and the structure of the regimental flower emphasizes symmetry. Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty once stipulated that the regular clothing of ministers should be large purple regimental flowers for the prince to the third grade and small red regimental flowers for the fifth grade and above. In the Song Dynasty, the Tuanhua Medallion Patterns were more exquisite and realistic, with a more flexible structure and less demanding symmetry. It is said that the fabrics of seasonal clothing at that time often included "lantern pattern brocade", "cluster four steal carving", "lion", "cloud", and "treasure photo brocade", all of which were based on Tuanhua and filled with other types of patterns.

3.2 Tuanhua Medallion Pattern in Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties

The complex structure and arrangement of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern in various dynasties were inextricably linked to the political and cultural background and economic prosperity and decline of that time. By the Yuan Dynasty, the regimental patterns of this period emerged from the implicit and gentle style of the Song Dynasty, presenting the rough and generous kind of nomadic peoples, and began to appear as textual elements. Among the official grades of the Yuan Dynasty, the first grade had large regimental flowers with a diameter of five inches, the second grade had small regimental flowers with a diameter of three inches, and below the third grade were smaller scattered patterns or miscellaneous flowers. In the Ming Dynasty, the higher the official status, the larger the diameter of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern decoration on the officials' robes, and vice versa. Using Tuanhua as a grade symbol has become a tradition from the Tang Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty. The picture shows a Tuanhua Medallion Pattern on Ming Dynasty clothing collected in the art museum of Tsinghua University. The phoenix wears a pair of peonies and flowers. The pattern depicts a pair of phoenixes and phoenixes echoing in the sea of flowers, swimming freely in the undulating auspicious clouds and the endless sea of blessings. The work is a circle with a diameter of 30 centimetres, and the ground is woven with twisted gold threads. The pattern uses exquisite tapestry techniques. The overall colour scheme is dominated by vibrant and elegant warm gold and red, presenting a delicate and feminine appearance. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Tuanhua Medallion Pattern on Ming Dynasty clothing collected

The Qing Dynasty was a popular period for Tuanhua Medallion Patterns, famous for their distinct layers, exquisite weaving and embroidery, elaborate designs, realistic techniques, and rich images. The composition was mainly symmetrical, radial, and rotated, and was filled with various combinations of Tuanhua Medallion Pattern representing different auspicious meanings, such as "Dragon and Phoenix Bringing Auspiciousness", "Pine Age, Crane, and Longevity", and "Three Friends of the Year and the Cold", such as dragon, phoenix, crane, longevity, four group dragons, and four group styles "Eight regiments, dragons and phoenixes, and other fixed motif patterns of regimental flowers, especially in the Kang, Yong, and Qian dynasties, on the one hand, add a magnificent and noble atmosphere to clothing, while at the same time displaying a unique scene of a rich life".^[4]

4. Modern Tuanhua Medallion Pattern

Under the direct influence of the Ming and Qing dynasties, according to existing data, there are many widely used flower patterns in textile patterns, such as characteristic fabrics or female worker embroidery, throughout modern China. For example, there are various patterns of Tuanhua Medallion Pattern in Suzhou embroidery; In addition, on printed blue fabrics in Zhejiang, Sichuan, Shandong, and Nantong, Jiangsu, there are also popular folk flowers patterns such as animal flowers, stars, anise flowers, and chrysanthemum flowers; Based on market demand, silk and satin fabrics produced in Suzhou and Hangzhou always use auspicious patterns such as Tuanhua Medallion Pattern as their selling points. In ancient times, there were many Tuanhua Medallion Patterns that men and women could share, such as peonies symbolizing wealth and honour, lotus flowers symbolizing sanctity, swallows symbolizing joy, and magpies symbolizing auspiciousness. These themes of the Tuanhua Medallion Pattern usually appeared in ancient men's clothing, but they were rare in modern men's clothing, far from being as broad and rich as in ancient times. Some middle-aged and older men with relatively wealthy families often add Chinese style and adorn them with long gowns with Tuanhua patterns. These costumes are mainly worn at unusual times, and many times they are also their last dresses when they die, embodying the imagination and expectations of the afterlife.

Through the exchange of diverse ethnic cultures, Tuanhua Medallion Pattern also appears repeatedly and in large numbers in the traditional clothing or fabric decoration of many ethnic groups, such as the wax-dyed flower patterns of the Miao and Gelao ethnic groups in Guizhou, the flower patterns embroidered by the Yi ethnic group in Yunnan, the flower patterns woven by the Tibetan and Mongolian ethnic groups, the large flower patterns of the Manchu costumes in Beijing and the flower patterns on the fabrics of the Qiang ethnic group in Sichuan.

5. Conclusion

The development and evolution of Tuanhua Medallion Patterns in different historical periods are inextricably linked to their historical backgrounds, religious beliefs, and foreign cultures. Current designers should make designs that keep pace with the times regarding structural forms and artistic expression, express this cultural essence in aesthetic forms, better explore and apply them, and better narrate Chinese stories based on ensuring contemporary aesthetics.

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