

ORNAMENTAL PATTERNS OF FENG SHUI THEMES IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE DWELLINGS

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In the architectural tradition of Chinese folk dwellings, decorative patterns are not merely ornamental; they are a carrier of survival wisdom. They function as a bridge between the physical environment and the human psyche. Guided by a holistic view of the universe, ancient builders approached settlement design with an all-encompassing idealism. When confronted with spatial flaws—be it an improper orientation or a jagged mountain view—they did not resign themselves to fate. Instead, they activated a creative remedial mechanism. By arranging specific patterns in designated spaces, they utilized visual correction to achieve psychological balance. This tradition, deeply rooted in Feng Shui (the art of placement), represents a profound pursuit of security. It evolved into a codified system where decorative patterns were used to "cure" architectural defects, ensuring the prosperity of the family and the clan.

The Philosophy of Correction

The logic behind this system is precise. It views Heaven as the father and Earth as the mother, with deities acting as the spiritual anchors. Decorative patterns serve as the active agents to ward off evil and invite auspiciousness.

This practice was never random; it was a targeted response to environmental defects:
Geometric Flaws: Missing corners in a floor plan, which were believed to cause a loss of wealth, were symbolically "filled" by protective totems.

Sensory Discomfort: Dark, gloomy spaces were treated with bright, fire-element imagery to simulate sunlight and warmth.

Spiritual Clashes: Positions affected by "Sha Qi" (killing breath or negative energy), such as a long straight path pointing at the door, were neutralized with auspicious symbols.

Beyond Superstition: An Ecological Perspective

It is crucial to understand that these "mysterious" patterns often embody ancient scientific principles. This system intertwines with early knowledge of geomagnetism, geology, and architecture. It addresses practical issues such as airflow direction (wind) and light distribution (sun), while also tapping into the psychology of safety.

The so-called practice of warding off evil spirits was, in effect, a method of environmental optimization. By manipulating symbols, the builders regulated the inhabitants' visual and spatial experience, elevating a simple shelter into a sanctuary that unified art, belief, and science.

The Application of the Five Elements

The ancient Chinese ideal was a dwelling that gathered "Sheng Qi" (vital energy)—nestled among mountains, commanding a view, and bathed in light. For homes that lacked this perfection, remedies were required.

Builders used the theory of the Five Elements to resolve unfavorable conditions. For example:

Hostile Terrain: If a house faced a sharp cliff or a harsh mountain ridge, specific patterns were used to "soften" the visual aggression.

Road Formations: Triangular road junctions or T-intersections facing the gate were considered dangerous. Remedial patterns were applied to the gate or roof to deflect this energy.

Guardians and Talismans

To block malevolent influences, specific architectural elements were employed:

Animal Totems: Dragons, tigers, lions, and oxen were carved onto corridors and walls to act as spiritual guardians.

The Bagua and Tai Chi: The Eight Trigrams and the Tai Chi symbol were carved onto beam frameworks or door panels to harmonize the flow of energy.

The Taishan Stone Patron: A unique custom involving a stone tablet (often inscribed with "Taishan Stone Patron") placed at a vulnerable spot to suppress evil spirits and ensure peace.

Through these methods, traditional Chinese dwellings achieved a sublimation, transforming from mere physical structures into integrated ecosystems that protected and nurtured life.

1. The True Forms of the Five Great Mountains: Remedial Decorative Patterns

The remedial decorative patterns known as the "True Forms of the Five Great Mountains" are essentially Taoist talismanic symbols used to correct spatial flaws and ward off misfortune. During the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420 AD), the Patriarch Ge Hong provided a vivid description of their power in his seminal work, *Baopuzi: The Master Who Embraces Simplicity* (specifically in the "Far-Flung Views" chapter).

Ge Hong described the "True Forms of the Five Great Mountains" map as the ultimate talisman. He claimed it could avert military disasters, 凶灾 (calamities), and rebellion.

Furthermore, it acted as a karmic shield: anyone who harbored evil intentions against the bearer of the map would inevitably suffer the consequences of their own malice.

Moreover, for Taoist priests seeking immortality and longevity, carrying this text (or map) into the mountains was essential. It served to repel tigers, wolves, and mountain spirits. Even venomous creatures like scorpions and snakes, along with various malevolent entities, would not dare to approach the person carrying it.

This tradition continued into the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD). The *Kaiyuan Daozang* (Taoist Canon of the Kaiyuan Era), compiled by the Chongxuan Institute, stated that

enshrining the "True Forms of the Five Great Mountains" in a home would prevent disasters and misfortune from arising, while ensuring that auspicious blessings would gather continuously. Keeping this map at home was akin to inviting benevolent deities to guard the household; all evil spirits, calamities, and illnesses would vanish on their own.

Hence, the popular folk saying emerged: "A home with the True Forms of the Five Great Mountains avoids harm, dispels disaster, and blocks all poisons."

The Kaiyuan Daozang also personified the five great mountains revered by the ancients, describing them as having distinct human-like postures and symbolic meanings:

- Mount Tai (East): Described as "sitting." It is like a mighty, unyielding giant seated in dignity. It represents solemnity and grace, symbolizing the idiom "as stable as Mount Tai"—focusing on the concept of stability.
- Mount Hua (West): Described as "standing." It resembles a person standing upright (with a momentum ready to soar). It represents the philosophy of "no destruction, no creation," symbolizing inspiration, strength, and the drive to soar into the sky.
- Mount Heng (South): Described as "flying." Uniquely, its posture resembles a bird spreading its wings. It represents lofty aspirations and ambition, symbolizing the idea of "startling the world with a single cry."
- Mount Heng (North): Described as "lying down." It is like a person resting (gathering strength for action). It represents galloping a thousand miles, symbolizing the courage to climb and strive.
- Mount Song (Central): As the center, it is described as "reclining" or "centered." It symbolizes being steeped in classics, representing a profound cultural heritage.

In practical application, these patterns served as a "psychological placebo" for the ancients. The decorative motifs of the "True Forms of the Five Great Mountains" were typically placed at the entrances of villages or private residences. They were used to mitigate unfavorable factors encountered during life's journeys—such as crossing rivers, entering valleys, walking in the wild at night, or staying in ominous rooms—thereby providing spiritual comfort and a sense of security.

The ancients did this mainly to dispel all kinds of unknown fears — such as those arising from crossing rivers and seas, venturing into remote mountains and valleys, traveling outdoors at night, or encountering demons and ghosts (the spirits of mountains, woods, rocks and waters) when occasionally staying in ominous haunted houses.

Ultimately, this was not only a ritual to ward off evil spirits, but also a way to seek spiritual comfort and a sense of security amid the uncertainties of ancient life.

The most common arrangement of stele inscriptions and physical artifacts of **the True Form Charts of the Five Great Mountains** (viewed from the observer's perspective facing the layout) is as follows:

- Upper right: Mount Tai, the Eastern Yue
- Upper left: Mount Heng, the Northern Yue
- Lower right: Mount Heng, the Southern Yue
- Lower left: Mount Hua, the Western Yue
- Center: Mount Song, the Central Yue

This layout of **four corners plus a central position** is the most prevalent on steles, bronze mirrors, hanging talisman plaques and other artifacts of the Five Great Mountains across successive dynasties.

In addition, a small number of ancient book editions feature slight variations in the labeling order of the mountain names. For instance, some follow a clockwise sequence: Eastern Yue, Northern Yue, Southern Yue and Western Yue, with the Central Yue remaining in the middle. Nevertheless, the corresponding mountain assigned to each corner stays largely unchanged.

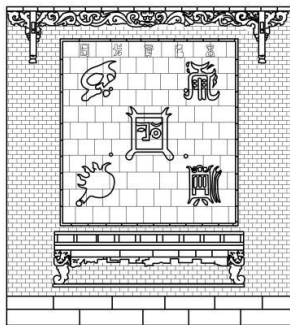


Fig.1 *The True Forms of the Five Great Mountains*

2. Pattern of Mount Tai Shi Gandang

It first appeared in the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), and was widely used throughout the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and Qing Dynasty (1636–1912).

This ornament is placed at inauspicious junctions and crossing spaces of settlements, alleys, roads and residential buildings, such as unfavorable orientations, lane entrances, street corners, house corners, wall tops and ground corners. It is mostly carved on stone slabs, and also seen in brick carving, lime sculpture and painted decoration.

In decorative designs, inscriptions of Mount Tai Stone and Mount Tai Shi Gandang are often combined with patterns of the Eight Trigrams, Tai Chi, deity figures and mythical beasts.

The Mount Tai motif symbolizes the source of all life. Regarded as a sacred divine mountain that nurtures all living things and governs life and death, it embodies the ancient belief: When Mount Tai is at peace, the whole nation rests in peace. Endowed with boundless spiritual power and auspicious blessings, it is an ideal ornament to invite good fortune and ward off misfortune. It holds a unique status and deep emotional significance in people's hearts.



Fig.2 *The Mountain God of Mount Tai (Supreme Sage Golden Elixir*

Honored Lord, Originator of All Divine Dharma) protects people from disasters and misfortunes.

3. Patterns of the River Map and Luo Script

Legend has it that over 7,000 years ago, a dragon horse carried the mystical River Map and emerged from the Meng River, a tributary between the Yellow River and Luo River. Based on the River Map and Luo Script, Fuxi created the Eight Trigrams. As ancient mystical feng shui patterns, the River Map and Luo Script embrace astronomy, geography and ancient science. They are symbolic diagrams of wisdom for understanding all things in the universe, and have profoundly influenced Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, numerology, as well as the origin and development of Chinese civilization.

Originally, the Luo Script was said to contain the flood-control strategies presented by a divine turtle to Yu the Great. Later it evolved into an auspicious heavenly scripture. Ancient people regarded both patterns as symbols of good fortune and evil avoidance.

The River Map consists of fifty-five black and white dots, representing the Numbers of Heaven and Earth. The white dots—1, 3, 5, 7 and 9—are odd numbers that symbolize Yang and Heaven, known as Heavenly Numbers. The black dots—2, 4, 6, 8 and 10—are even numbers that symbolize Yin and Earth, known as Earthly Numbers.

The total sum of Heavenly Numbers is twenty-five, and Earthly Numbers total thirty, signifying that Heaven generates all things and Earth completes them.

The Nine Palaces numbers of the Luo Script take 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 as odd Yang numbers, and 2, 4, 6 and 8 as even Yin numbers.

Yang numbers prevail and occupy the four cardinal directions, representing the cosmic qi of Heaven. Yin numbers serve as auxiliary and occupy the four diagonal corners, representing the earthly qi of Earth. The number Five resides at the center, belonging to Earth Element. It is the origin of the generating numbers of the Five Elements, dwelling in the Central Palace and prospering across all four corners.

To remedy deficiencies in the balance of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, ancient people decorated the outer walls of dwellings, the highest courtyard walls, major verandas, horizontal beams, bracket blocks, partition screens and lattice windows with River Map and Luo Script patterns.

Stone carvings of the dragon horse bearing the River Map and the divine turtle carrying the Luo Script were also placed at main gateways of residences. These ornaments are believed to clear confusion, resolve troubles, bless students with academic success, bring prosperity to the family, and ensure the successful completion of great undertakings.

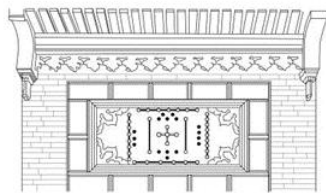


Fig.3 *The River Map and Luo Script Symbols for Inviting Blessings and Warding off Misfortune Under the Eaves*

4. Lion Guardian Pattern

As the king of all beasts, the lion has a fierce and formidable appearance, possessing unmatched courage and commanding widespread awe. It is believed to safeguard the continuity and prosperity of a family, dispel misfortune, and invoke blessings. Regarded as an auspicious mythical creature in Chinese tradition, the lion pattern is mainly used to counteract unfavorable environmental features facing a residence, such as gaps in the landscape, steep cliffs, and overly open exposed terrain.

For folk houses with imbalances in Yin–Yang and the Five Elements, stone lions are placed on both sides of the main gate to block negative spiritual influences. Male lion carvings may also be set above door lintels to remedy geomantic flaws, or lion-head ornaments are used alone to ward off ominous forces outside the dwelling.

According to regional customs, geomantic conditions, house styles, and practical needs, different forms and facial expressions of lions are selected for household protection: majestic lions, stern lions, vigilant guardian lions, joyful lions, harmonious lions, playful lions, reclining lions, and standing lions, among others.



Fig.4-1 *Fierce and imposing frontal lion statues are placed to block evil spirits and malevolent energy from entering the residence.*

Sword Lion House-Guarding Pattern

The Sword Lion decorative pattern originated in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD). It is commonly mounted above the main gate of settlements and traditional folk dwellings that face water outlets, street entrances, alley mouths, road junctions and crossroads. It can also be placed on the parapet walls of auxiliary buildings.

The lion is portrayed holding its head high and chest out, crouching on the ground with bared fangs and claws. It clenches a short sword in its mouth; the sword hilt usually faces left. In a minority of cases, the sword tip faces right, serving to counteract inauspicious influences on the right side.

The pattern is meant to dispel demons, ward off evil spirits, and soothe mental distress and inner unease.



Fig.4-2 *Fierce and powerful, the lion with its sharp sword is an efficacious talisman to guard the residence and suppress ill fortune.*

Wind Lion Pattern

Also known as Pastoral Wind Lion Lord.

Legend traces its origin to two figures from Fengshen Bang (Investiture of the Gods): either Shen Gongbao or Huang Feihu.

New Kinmen Chronicle records:

‘On the rooftops of local houses, one often sees pottery roof ornaments shaped like open-mouthed lions, and others armored in military regalia; they are named Chiyou.’ The Wind Lion is a divine mythical beast believed to subdue wind evils, ward off malignant spirits, protect geomantic fortune, repel water ghosts and hauntings, reduce plagues of pests, and safeguard wealth and fortune. Sculptures and decorative patterns of the Wind Lion Lord can be found everywhere across Kinmen County, Fujian Province.

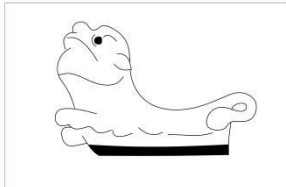


Fig.4-3 Stone Carvings of Wind Lion Lord of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD): They are generally installed at proper positions on courtyard walls and roof ridges.

5. Water-Suppressing Divine Beast Pattern

Decorative patterns include Gongfu (蚣蝮/跗蝮 also known as Baxia), giant oxen, giant rhinoceroses, and other mythical creatures. They are mainly adorned on bridge piers and approach bridges in front of residential buildings, revetment joints, as well as beside wells and water ditches.

Legend holds that Gongfu, or Baxia, is the eldest son of the true dragon. It features a flat dragon head with horns on top, dragon scales covering its body, limbs and tail. With a large mouth and capacious belly, it can endlessly absorb floodwaters and devour water demons. Ancient people believed it could subdue water monsters and mountain spirits, ward off flood disasters, protect farmland and grain supplies, and create a stable and peaceful living environment.

Biography of the Shu Kings records: ‘When the river brought severe flooding, Li Bing, the governor of Shu, had five stone rhinoceroses carved. Two were placed in the administrative mansion, one beneath the city market bridge, and two submerged in the river.’

Patterns of giant oxen and giant rhinoceroses are employed to bless the land with peace in all directions and bring timely rains and favorable harvests.

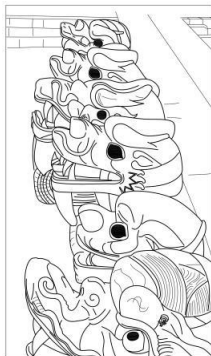
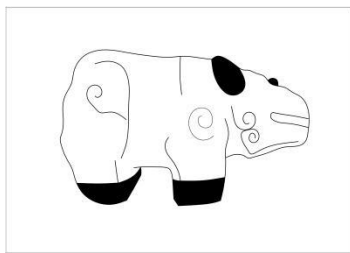


Fig.5-1 Stone Carving of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD): Water-suppressing Gongfu in front of a folk residence.



5-2 Stone Rhinoceros Carving at the marshland in front of a folk residence.

6. Remedial Decorative Patterns of the Five Elements Wall

These patterns are mainly used to counteract inauspicious geomantic influences such as road intersection evil energy, house corner evil energy, backing negative energy, drainage passage evil energy, and foundation formation ominous energy. Based on the owner's birth eight characters, practitioners apply the principles of the Five Elements to determine which type of Five Elements wall should be adopted for the gable walls and wall bases of the traditional dwelling.

Ancient ancestors designed customized Five Elements graphic combinations according to the calculation of the house owner's Yin-Yang and Five Elements fortune. They built Five Elements Walls with bricks, stones and tiles, aiming to gain spiritual peace and mental comfort.

Metal Element Gable: Shaped in a semicircle or full circle. The wall coping is nearly round, and the wall body curves gently outward; round or semi-circular carved blocks are often inlaid at the wall base. It symbolizes authority and wealth.

Wood Element Gable and Wall Base: Designed as a rectangle or a slender modified trapezoid. The wall coping is small and rounded, with a straight and flat wall body. It symbolizes prosperity and spiritual vitality.

Water Element Wall Coping and Wall Base: Formed with wave lines, continuous arcs, or square frames embedded with multiple tall round arches. It symbolizes nourishment, blessing and wisdom.

Fire Element Gable and Wall Base: Presented as triangles or continuous pointed shapes. The wall coping bears sharp peaks, and the wall body gradually broadens downward. It symbolizes prosperity, vitality and brightness.

Earth Element Gable: Built in a square shape or well-grid pattern. The wall looks steady, calm and dignified. It symbolizes stability, solidity, loyalty and integrity.

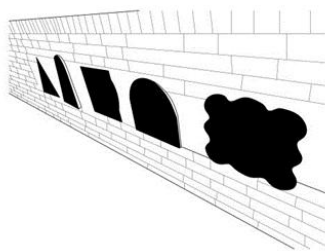


Fig.6-1 Water, Metal, Earth, Wood, Fire (from right to left)

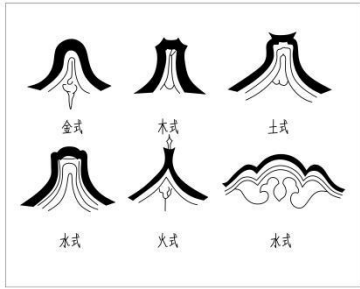


Fig.6-2 Five-Element Wall Coping Built with Brick, Clay and Tile of the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD).

7. Ornamental Patterns of Ci Wen (鸱吻) and Wang Shou (望兽)

An ancient literary (《上疏》) memorial states: ‘Chi Wei, the essence of water, can ward off fire disasters and may be placed on halls and palace roofs.’

The prototype of Ci Wen is believed to be a giant deep-sea whale. It has a broad mouth and a powerful roar, and is by nature fond of swallowing. It devours all demons and spirits and is especially capable of engulfing flames. For this reason, Ci Wen figures are placed on the main roof ridges and upturned eaves to prevent fire. To keep the creature from swallowing the house itself, a sword is fixed upright on its back and head.

Endowed with an affinity for the waters of rivers and seas and possessing divine power over ancient rituals and spiritual charms, Ci Wen and Wang Shou were regarded by ancient people as apotropaic patterns capable of repelling fire and averting calamity. They are also revered as symbolic incarnations that relieve drought, extinguish fires, and safeguard against disasters.

Different from Ci Wen beasts, which face each other and bite the main roof ridge, Wang Shou (Roof Watcher Beasts) are by nature fond of gazing afar, traveling far, evading misfortune, and guarding passes. They look out in all directions, gaze into the distance, observe the world, convey auspicious blessings, and keep watch over the safety of the family dwelling.

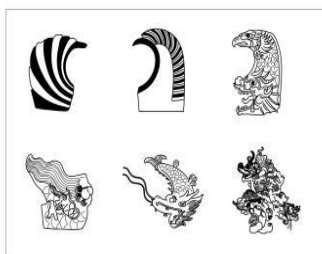


Fig.7-1 Arranged from top to bottom and left to right:

Northern Dynasties, Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD), Five Dynasties (907–960 AD), Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD), Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD), Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD).



Fig.7-2 Brick Carving of the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD):

Baring fangs and claws, gazing upward into the distance.

8. Cat Pattern on Roof Tiles

The cat features a round head, ears pointing upward, protruding large eyes, a wide mouth with a long tongue, and neat rows of sharp teeth. It has slender sloping shoulders and thin elongated limbs. Some are carved with the Chinese character Wang (King) on the forehead, while others are stamped with the Eight Trigrams symbol. This pattern is believed to rectify the geomantic balance of a residence, devour demons and evil spirits, suppress malign influences, and usher in good fortune.

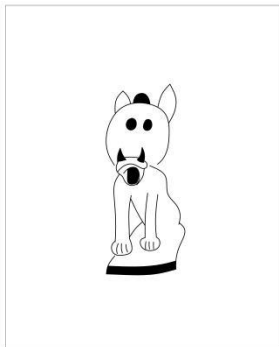


Fig.8. Glazed Pottery Cat, Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD):

Crouching above the main gateway and in the middle of the main hall's roof ridge.

9. Roof Apex Evil-Suppressing Patterns

Roof apex ornaments are distinctive decorations on the roof ridges of traditional folk residences, associated with fire prevention, lightning protection, and the dispelling of evil influences. Common pattern styles include pagoda style, pavilion style, gate-tower style, vase style, gourd style, and auspicious beast style. They symbolize the eternal stability of the family foundation and clan heritage, as well as the blessings of Buddha.

Gourd and precious vase patterns on ridge tops are regarded as ritual talismans to ward off evil and avert misfortune. Pagoda patterns on ridge tops imply Buddha's protection and the expulsion of demons and goblins. Some water-smoke motifs are designed to prevent fires, while flame patterns serve to drive away wandering spirits and phantoms. Aureole patterns are believed to foretell good and ill fortune, blessings and calamities.

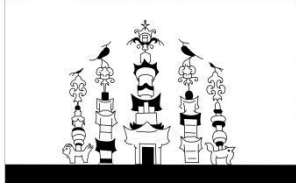


Fig.9. Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD) glazed roof apex ornament: a composite design of the sun emblem, divine birds, mythical beasts, and pavilion architecture.

10. Hanging Fish Remedial Decorative Pattern

The hanging fish ornament is mounted on the gable end of traditional folk houses. It is generally strip-shaped and crafted in wood carving, brick carving, or glazed tile. The pattern is often integrated with remedial symbolic motifs such as the Eight Trigrams, Tai Chi, the sun, the moon, clouds, and water. It is intended to pursue good fortune and avoid misfortune, prevent fires and ward off disasters, and also serve as a moral warning against bribery. When a corner of a residence suffers unfavorable geographical energy, hanging fish decorated with a combined pattern of the sun, the moon and clouds is adopted. It is believed to generate powerful cosmic energy, strengthen clan cohesion, stabilize family fortune, and boost male vitality.

If the Yin–Yang and Five Elements of the dwelling lack spiritual potency, the Five Stars Convergence pattern is applied to pray for great auspiciousness and prosperity. Where the Five Elements are deficient in water, hanging fish inscribed with the character Ren Water (壬水) is used, carrying the implied meaning of supreme dignity and absolute authority. In cases of imbalanced Yin–Yang and weak fertility among family members, a combination of Tai Chi, the Eight Trigrams and water motifs is adopted.

For an inauspicious corner of a folk residence, hanging fish is decorated with tiger teeth and ruyi patterns, symbolizing mighty vitality, smooth blessings and good fortune.



Fig.10-1 Painted lime sculpture of the Qing Dynasty: a hanging fish ornament combined with tiger-tooth, Tai Chi and ruyi patterns.

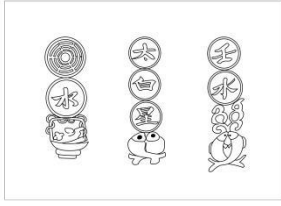


Fig.10-2 Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912 AD): A hanging fish ornament in strip-plate shape combined with inscriptions, symbols and animal patterns.

11. Remedial decorative patterns for gateway facade defects

When ancient ancestors designed remedial decorative patterns for gateway facades, their primary consideration was to avoid having the household gate directly facing the neighbor’s gate across the alley, as well as preventing roof ridges and upturned eaves from aligning straight toward the gateway facade. Meanwhile, evil-averting patterns were adorned on the curved and dragon-shaped retaining walls, elevated plinths and high steps at the entrance of the main residential gate.

If a dwelling suffered from damp and gloomy conditions, bringing about frequent infestations of centipedes, ants, scorpions and other pests, people would easily fall ill or be haunted by ominous spiritual influences, which were believed to lead to fewer offspring and shortened lifespan. For such problems, ancestors targeted the issue by applying brick carvings, stone carvings and painted decorations with remedial patterns on the lintel, crossbeam, architrave and partition wall of the gateway facade, so as to dispel malevolent spiritual qi.

(1). Tun Kou (Dun Kou) Pattern

It is a kind of door-knocker-shaped decorative pattern combining the features of dragon, tiger, lion and human head. It has a round head, bulging forehead, upturned nose, a wide open mouth with bared teeth, and a fierce countenance.

Some variations feature a high broad forehead, dog-like ears, dragon eyes, ox nose, long fangs, a grinning mouth and protruding tongue; some hold a sharp sword in the mouth. This mythical creature is integrated with Bagua diagrams, Tai Chi symbols and ancient inscriptions.

Ancient ancestors believed it could devour the Five Poisons, demons and evil spirits that brought calamities to the world. As a sacred beast for exorcising evil and suppressing misfortune, it embodied people’s wishes for bumper grain harvests, prosperous families and auspicious well-being for all household members.

Many residential buildings feature decorative patterns of Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (天干地支), which represent the ancient Chinese calendar system. These patterns emerged as ancient ancestors devised housing orientation and layout

arrangements to remedy mismatches among directions, Five Elements (五行), and seasons.

As special decorative motifs conceived by Feng Shui (风水) masters (commonly known as Geomancy Masters 地理先生), they take into account the building's location, season, timing, as well as the homeowner's birth year, month, day and hour. Bearing profound architectural Feng Shui implications, their symbolic meanings include: invoking blessings and good fortune, safeguarding the residence for peace, and embodying the cycle of time with endless vitality. They imply that the dwelling aligns with celestial rhythms, bringing peace throughout the four seasons and perpetual prosperity of descendants.

The Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches decorative patterns embody the ancients' way of integrating temporal order into living spaces, expressing aspirations for good fortune and avoiding misfortune, family harmony, and eternal vitality in harmony with cosmic rhythms. Some folk dwellings even adorn every corner with the complete set of Stem-Branch symbols, signifying the full cycle of time and space. This conveys the blessing of the passage of years and endless vitality, as well as hidden wishes for smooth seasons and lasting family fortune.

Furthermore, Stem-Branch patterns function to harmonize directional energy fields. Combined with the building's facing and mountain backing orientation, these symbols correspond to the directional attributes of the Five Elements, balancing Yin and Yang energy within the residence. This achieves the classic geomantic ideal of 'Gathering Wind and Accumulating Vitality, Seeking Benefit and Avoiding Harm', fully conforming to the architectural philosophy of traditional Geomancy.

Directional symbolic patterns such as Jia (甲), Si (巳) and Ren (壬) each carry unique connotations:

Jia, the first of the Heavenly Stems, is a homophone for "noble mansion and official rank", symbolizing success in imperial examinations.

The Si pattern, shaped like a Ruyi scepter, is often used to pray for fire prevention (water restraining fire) and protect household peace. Associated with the Si-Hai (巳亥) pairing and corresponding to the Snake zodiac, it is widely applied to ward off evil spirits and avoid fire disasters.

In particular, the Ren (壬) pattern symbolizes suppressing fire hazards, resolving fiery malevolent influences, and guarding household safety. Its original meaning denotes the transition from extreme Yin to nascent Yang, representing gestation and nourishment; phonetically aligned with Ren (妊/任, conception and endurance), it symbolizes latent Yang energy and all things poised for growth. It embodies blessings for family offspring, enduring descendants, and perpetual prosperity of the household. Additionally, Ren carries the meaning of "bearing and upholding", expressing hopes for a stable residence and long-lasting blessings and good fortune.



Fig.11-1 Folk dwelling wood carving: a mask with glaring eyes and the character Ren (壬) engraved on its forehead.

(2). Remedial Decorative Patterns of Door Pins

In response to unfavorable Five Elements layout of the main gate and its orientation in ancient architecture, ancient people adopted door pins decorated with trigrams and Tai Chi patterns as a remedy, to block evil qi from entering the house and gain spiritual comfort.

For instance, if a residence lacks the ****Fire**** element in the Five Elements, the trigram ☲ will be carved in stone or painted in color on the lintel for remedy. In folk houses plagued by the Five Poisons, serrated patterns combined with bronze mirror patterns are applied to ward off evil spirits.

Where the gate orientation brings inauspicious influences on the Five Elements, family population and wealth fortune, the head and tail of door pins are adorned with combined patterns including swastika, Bagua, Tai Chi, copper cash, bronze mirror, double fish, yuyi and inscribed characters to protect the residence and courtyard.

If malevolent aura lingers around the gate, door pins will be decorated with rhinoceros horns, the Eight Immortals' Emblems and Mixed Eight Treasures to dispel ominous energy.

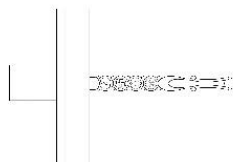


Fig.11-2 Wood carvings of Qing-dynasty folk dwellings: swastika symbols, Eight Trigrams (八卦), coin patterns and other motifs carved on the ends of hairpins.

(3). Door God Remedial Decorative Patterns

Among the most common town-house and courtyard-protecting decorative patterns, door gods rank first. The worship of door gods originated in the Eastern Han Dynasty.

Representative types include Shentu and Yulei of the Eastern Han Dynasty; Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong of the Tang Dynasty; and derivative styles from the Song and Ming dynasties, such as military door gods, civil official door gods, boy door gods, fairy maiden door gods, and Zhong Kui door gods.

For dwellings situated on downhill slopes, steep ridges, mountain gaps, or overly gloomy and secluded terrain, door god patterns are adopted to guard the residence and ward off evil spirits.

Shentu and Yulei, the earliest Eastern Han door gods, were believed to capture ghosts and demons to feed to tigers.

Known as the top door gods of the Tang Dynasty, Qin Shubao and Yuchi Gong are depicted holding paired maces and whips, capable of expelling demons and punishing tyrannical rulers as well as disloyal civil and military officials.

From the Song Dynasty onward, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei became the most celebrated door gods symbolizing loyalty and righteousness. Armed with the Green Dragon Crescent Blade and the Eight-Foot Serpent Spear respectively, they subdue all evil spirits and chastise those guilty of disloyalty and unfilial conduct.

Wei Zheng and Zhong Kui stand as the most righteous door gods, regarded as the vanquishers of all goblins and phantoms.

Zhao Gongming, the God of Wealth, and Zhang Dan, the God of the Hearth, are the most folk-oriented patron deities. They suppress evil forces that harm crops and livestock, safeguarding people's ample food and clothing.

Additionally, the most distinctive, auspicious and aesthetically pleasing types include boy door gods and fairy maiden door gods, who serve as guardian deities for women and children.

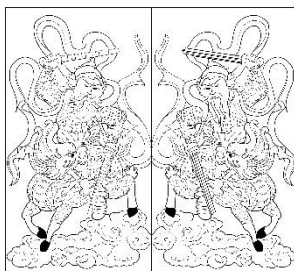


Fig.11-3 Stone carvings of the Song Dynasty: Qin Shubao and Yuchi Gong hold a pair of maces and a pair of whips respectively, to ward off

demons and evil spirits

(4) Remedial Ornamental Patterns of Fairy Door Gods (仙女门神)

These divine female figures are believed to bless women with robust fertility and protect children's healthy growth, embodying the prayer for heavenly auspiciousness and the blessing of new births.

The Fairy Door Gods are depicted as graceful yet heroic. Classic prototypes include legendary female heroines: Fan Lihua, Dou Xiantong, Chen Jinding, Xue Jinlian, Huang Jinling, Diao Yuehong, as well as Mu Guiying and Qin Liangyu. Some are clad in full armor adorned with tall feather plumes, battle robes and ceremonial pennants, wielding swords or long broadswords; others appear in elaborate flowing costumes with billowing ribbons, holding sacred ritual treasures.

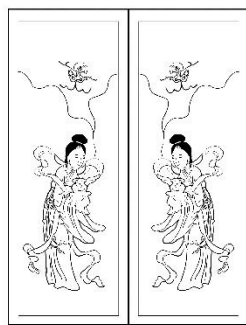


Fig.11-4 Qing Dynasty residential painted

ornaments: female door gods depicted in the elegant likeness of traditional court ladies.

(5) Remedial Decorative Pattern of Boy Door Gods

Boy door gods are mainly used to counteract adverse feng shui influences such as reduced male descendants, shortened lifespan and scarce blessings, and they also carry the implied meaning of preventing wealth dissipation.

In the pattern: The boy door gods wear amiable smiles. The boy in green holds a tray from which celestial mist drifts, and within the mist appears an elongated Chinese character *Shou* (Longevity) wrapped in teal ribbons, symbolizing longevity for ten thousand generations. Within the celestial mist surrounding the boy in red are painted mountain rocks and surging waves. Here, mountain rocks symbolize mountains and ridges, while water waves represent rivers, conveying the implication of eternal stability of the nation and landscape.

In other versions, each boy holds a fruit plate filled with pomegranates, narcissus flowers, glossy ganoderma, ruyi scepters and bats. These motifs symbolize good fortune in all undertakings, blessings and longevity, prosperity of sons and grandsons, endless descendants, and joyful embrace of spring prosperity.

Some patterns adopt the classic scene of Guo Ziyi (697–781) Attending Court with His Sons as the door god motif. On one side, Guo Jujing (697–781) holds an official tablet, while his son carries a vase with a halberd inserted inside, subtly implying promotion and rising rank threefold. On the other side, Guo Ziyi holds an official

tablet accompanied by his son bearing a ruyi scepter, signifying auspiciousness and fulfillment of wishes.



Fig.11-5 Qing Dynasty residential painted decoration: agile and amiable child door gods holding sacred treasures

12. Remedial Decorative Patterns for Spatial Defects in Folk Dwellings

Halls, corridors and other spaces along the central axis of folk dwellings serve as shared areas for the entire clan and family. These spaces are closely associated with the prosperity of the clan, growth of population, flourishing academic fortune, as well as auspicious and inauspicious implications concerning birth, aging, illness and death, making them vitally important locations. Therefore, ancient ancestors fully took into account the ideal feng shui elements for such halls. Where spatial defects existed, targeted decorative patterns were adopted for remedy.

(1) Remedial Decorative Patterns for Structural Defects of Beam Frames

The ridge girder is the most crucial structural component of the entire building. To safeguard the physical and mental well-being of the clan and family, secure prosperity in talent and wealth fortune, and ward off evil spirits and misfortunes, ancient ancestors commonly applied portraits of the Great Emperor Ziwei for remedial purposes. They also used patterns combining the Eight Trigrams, vajra pestles, prayer beads, dragons and phoenixes crafted from gold, silver, copper, tin and iron.



Fig.12-1 Gilded copper-inlaid wood carving in Ming-dynasty folk dwellings: prayer beads interspersed among flowers.

(2) Remedial decorative patterns of melon posts with Nuo masks.

When a residential homestead suffered ill omens such as dwindling descendants and frequent illness, ancient folk residents would adorn the beam framework with Nuo masks, or install hanging melon posts carved with combined human and beast faces to secure the house and ward off misfortune.

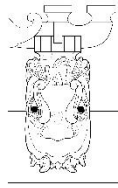


Fig.12-2 Yuan Dynasty Wooden Carving with Lacquer Coloring: A short melon-shaped pillar in the form of a mythical beast resembling a Nuo mask.

(3) Remedial decorative patterns of sill windows.

Some folk dwellings adopt the shapes and patterns of sill windows and lattice windows to ward off evil spirits and remedy feng shui flaws. For instance: round and square windows are used to make up for the deficiency of the Five Elements; phoenix-eye lattice windows are applied to amplify auspicious energy; irregular-shaped and Bagua-patterned windows serve to strengthen the evil-suppressing function; fan-shaped windows are adopted to remedy inadequate literary fortune; lattice windows with swastika fretwork are used to pray for the blessing of Buddha.

For feng shui defects in the east and northeast directions, square windows are deployed to suppress evil spirits; for those in the southeast, irregular-shaped windows are used; for the west and southwest, triangular windows are adopted; for the north and northwest, round windows are applied.

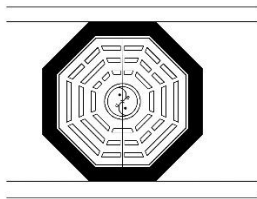


Fig.12-3 Ming Dynasty Wood Carving with Lacquer Decoration: Bagua-shaped Lattice Window.

(4) Remedial Decorative Patterns of Evil-Averting and Blessing Tablets.

This type of decoration is placed in prominent positions of the main hall. The shield-shaped pattern is arranged with a variety of symbolic motifs, including figures representing blessing, official rank and longevity, the Gathering of the Eight Immortals, Liu Hai Playing with the Golden Toad, Dongfang Shuo Stealing Peaches of Immortality, the Heavenly Qilin Prodigy, the Wealth-Dispensing Boy, the Kui Star Pointing at the Dipper, Magu Presenting Longevity Peaches, the Two Immortals of Harmony and Union, and the Eight Trigrams. Together they form a grand scene of Taoist immortals gathering to ward off misfortune and invoke blessings.

As an ancient weapon, the shield itself is an evil-averting symbol, embodying the implications of defense, divine protection, safety, fortitude and stability. The Eight Trigrams pattern at the center is intended to optimize feng shui, resolve directional

clashes, block malevolent influences and dispel evil spirits. It carries psychological connotations of prospering wealth and neutralizing baleful qi, eliminating illness and evil, pursuing good fortune and avoiding calamity, as well as regulating personal vital energy.

Each of the Eight Immortals possesses unique supernatural powers, and their respective ritual implements correspond to different trigram symbols, functioning to expel negative energy, ward off evil and disasters, subdue demons and protect the residence. Within the framework of the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams, the Eight Immortals harmonize Yin and Yang and balance the Five Elements. They also bless children with safe comings and goings, turning misfortune into good luck and ensuring healthy growth. The Heavenly Qilin Prodigy symbolizes perpetual auspiciousness for descendants; Dongfang Shuo and Magu represent longevity; Liu Hai and the Wealth-Dispensing Boy symbolize prosperity and fortune; the Two Immortals of Harmony and Union stand for conjugal harmony, happiness and perfect fulfillment.



Fig.12-4 Qing Dynasty Wooden Carving with Lacquer Coloring: Shield-shaped ornament, an auspicious blessing tablet composed of figures, immortals and auspicious beasts.

(5) Composite pattern of tiger and leopard heads, immortals, and suanni legs.

Ancient folk people favored auspicious beast patterns combining tiger heads, immortal-style limbs and suanni legs, which were decorated on door lintels, door pillars and furniture legs.

Relying on the majesty, fortitude and auspicious symbolism of tigers and leopards, together with the swift power of suanni legs, such patterns are believed to expel the five poisonous creatures, ward off evil influences, dispel misfortune, and devour all ghosts and spirits.

In Chinese, tiger (虎) is a homophone for blessing (福); leopard (豹) shares the same pronunciation with tidings (报) and subdue (暴). It implies auspicious tigers arriving at the doorstep, blessings arising with the tiger's roar, vigorous vitality, good tidings of peace, and suppressing all evil forces.

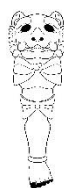


Fig.12-5 Song Dynasty Grey Sculpture with Polychrome Painting: Composite pattern of tiger head, divine shoulders and vajra legs.

(6) Patterns of Qilin, Lion and Seven Stars.

To counteract malevolent qi at the main entrance of folk residences, ****piercing beam evil spirit**** on beams and gateways, ****courtyard patio evil spirit**** in skylight patios, and ****wall blade evil spirit**** indoors, ancient folk people adopted the imagery of qilin facing the rising sun, crowned with the Seven Stars, treading on auspicious clouds and exhaling propitious aura, so as to resolve all inauspicious and baleful influences.

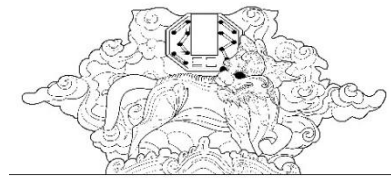


Fig.12-6 Qing Dynasty Wood Carving: A lion bearing a Bagua Seven-Star Tablet amid auspicious clouds.

13. Remedial Decorative Patterns for Ground Feng Shui Defects

The open yards, eaves and patios between residential buildings serve for daylighting, ventilation, drainage and temperature regulation. When sunlight gently permeates these spaces, it is called Spreading Golden Radiance, symbolizing abundant wealth and incoming fortune. Rainwater falling from surrounding eaves into the patio embodies the principle of Water Returning to the Hall, commonly known as Flowing Silver.

The rainwater flows into drainage holes, passes through underground dragon-shaped hidden ditches, and exits toward the incoming water direction on the left side of the dwelling's orientation. This implies an endless flow of heavenly wealth and vital energy. Such spaces connect the interior and exterior, gathering wind and retaining qi, carrying the auspicious meanings of accumulating wealth, nurturing vital energy, and achieving harmony between humanity and nature.

If the ground of these spaces harbors inauspicious influences that may bring harm to family members, damage talent and fortune, or shorten lifespan, craftsmen would apply remedial decorative patterns on ground-related components. These include door buttress stones, door thresholds, golden pillars under eaves, plinths, ventilation openings, dedicated cat-and-dog access holes, water inlet and outlet holes, stylobates and steps. Common patterns adopted for remedy include the Eight Trigrams, Taiji, coin patterns, qilin, deer, and endless knot.

To keep the residence as steady as Mount Tai, safe and peaceful for generations, single or multiple script-sealing stones are placed along the central axis. They are intended to permanently stabilize auspicious fortune of the household. To prevent wealth from leaking away, sealing stones at water inlet and outlet holes are decorated with swastika symbols, ancient coin motifs, and Armored General patterns.

In times of adverse annual fortune, physical and mental illness, misfortune to family members, shortened lifespan, or stagnant official career, ancient folk people would arrange combined patterns of deer, crane, bamboo, ganoderma lucidum and endless knot on door buttress stones and patio grounds. These patterns are believed to reverse bad luck, eliminate illness, bless physical health, and ensure a prosperous official career.

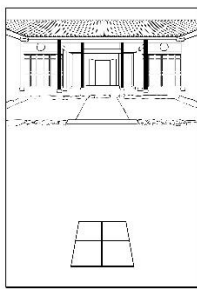


Fig.13-1 Qing Dynasty Stone Carving: Scripture-Sealing Stone on the ground of the central-axis courtyard of a folk residence.

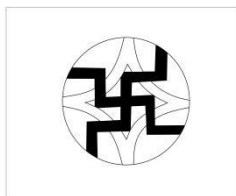


Fig.13-2 Qing Dynasty stone carving: The swastika pattern tightly encloses the coin-hole-shaped drainage hole.

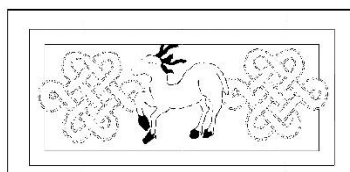


Fig.13-3 Pebble Pavement in the Courtyard of Qing-dynasty Vernacular Dwellings: Combined pattern of the Pan Chang Knot (Chinese Knot) and deer.

14. Remedial Decorative Patterns on Vernacular Dwelling Details.

When a residence suffers from an unfavorable orientation, poor lighting, cramped space, unstable backing mountain, steep mountain ridge in the front, insufficient left and right guardian mountains, or deficient vitality in the architectural surroundings—especially when the Five Elements are unbalanced, and the entrances

and exits (main gate, inner door, corridor gate) conflict with auspicious geomantic factors—ancient people would decorate evil-averting patterns on the beam frames, lintels, eaves corridors, roof corners, parapet walls, door headers, door lintels, chamber doors and other parts of vernacular dwellings.

The purposes are to pursue peaceful residence, happy life, prosperous career, thriving family fortune, smooth official luck, ward off evil influences, and expel ghosts and goblins.

(1) Black Tortoise (Tortoise and Snake) House-Guarding Pattern

The ritual of divination with tortoise shell and yarrow stalks to inquire fortune and misfortune from heaven and earth has influenced the Chinese mindset for thousands of years.

Ancients believed the tortoise possessed the power to predict future fortune and misfortune, and was a spiritual creature that dispelled disasters and avoided calamities.

The Book of Rites · Qu Li records: ‘Yarrow symbolizes longevity; tortoise symbolizes perpetuity. A tortoise gains spiritual insight after a thousand years, and yarrow acquires divine power after a hundred years. By virtue of their long lifespan, they are able to distinguish good fortune from misfortune.’

In paintings centered on the Black Tortoise, set amid ruyi cloud patterns on bracket blocks, the Black Tortoise carries a heavenly scripture on its back and looks back over its shoulder. It symbolizes exorcising demons and spirits and remaining invincible against all malevolent forces.

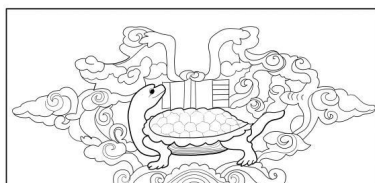


Fig.14-1 Qing-dynasty Wood Carving: Black Tortoise Bearing Sacred Scripture Amid Auspicious Clouds.

(2) Bagua Remedial Decorative Patterns

In ancient Chinese architecture, the Bagua (Eight Trigrams) diagram is widely adopted as an auspicious motif to dispel misfortune and ward off disasters.

The philosophy and culture of the Bagua boast a long history and have been deeply rooted in people’s minds for thousands of years. Ancient people purposely decorated Bagua patterns on corresponding parts of ancient buildings to achieve the psychological effect of invoking good fortune and avoiding calamities, aiming to remedy adverse geographical conditions such as solitary peaks, gullies, frontal ridges, steep slopes and flood hazards.

Its main expressive forms are interlocking floral scrolls combined with Bagua motifs.

The slightly raised trigram pattern ☲ (Li, Fire Trigram), crafted in reddish-brown stucco on a black background, is used to remedy the geomantic flaws of houses facing due south. It is applied when there are drainage ditches, gaps or steep cliffs between mountains near the residence, or straight-ridged mountain farmlands facing the house; or when the house owner lacks the Fire element in the Five Elements, suffers from excessive Yang energy throughout the four seasons, and is deficient in red and florid hues among the Five Colors.

The Li trigram ☲ consists of two Yang lines and one Yin line, embodying the harmony of Yin and Yang and the mutual complementation of Water and Fire. For this reason, it was chosen by ancient people as a geomantic remedial decorative pattern.

It carries the meaning of brightness, symbolizing the trait of being firm without yet yielding externally, warm yet calm internally. It is believed to sharpen perception, promote physical health, bless the family with prosperous descendants generation after generation, and bring harmony to the household and prosperity to all undertakings.

Some residential decorations adopt combined patterns of Bagua and soaring dragons. Dragons are endowed with divine attributes such as connecting heaven and earth, adaptability, spiritual transcendence, omening auspiciousness, foretelling misfortune, and manifesting majesty, possessing all geomantic virtues for protecting the dwelling. The motif implies supreme good fortune and unshakable peace as firm as Mount Tai. It also echoes the Confucian tenet of ****self-cultivation, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world****. Additionally, it symbolizes the traditional ethic that women manage domestic affairs while men take charge of external affairs, representing harmonious coexistence, mutual respect and affection between men and women.

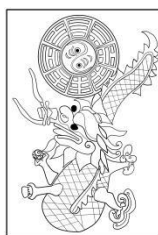


Fig.14-2 Ming Dynasty Stone Carving
Cloud dragons soaring in the firmament, and Eight Trigrams frolicking in the sky.

(3) Taiji Remedial Decorative Pattern

Also known as the Yin-Yang Fish, it is praised as the No.1 Pattern of China. Historical documents record multiple versions of the Taiji Diagram, including the Zhou-style Taiji Diagram, the Innate Taiji Diagram, and the Lai-style Circular

Diagram. Nevertheless, the only mature and standard form of the Taiji Diagram is the small-headed Yin-Yang Fish design established by Zhao Huqian (1351–1395) of the Ming Dynasty.

It implies the unity of opposites, symbolizes auspicious reunion, and embodies blessings for peace, good fortune, and the warding off of evil spirits. In decorative patterns, the Taiji Diagram is mostly rendered in black and white, with occasional red-and-black combinations. The circular pattern is divided equally into two independent halves.

Three-eyed and four-eyed Yin-Yang Fish patterns are extremely rare; their differing structural arrangements carry distinct symbolic meanings. Double Taiji Diagrams arranged side by side embody the philosophy of two elements merging into one. The black fish eye symbolizes Yin, and the red fish eye symbolizes Yang. This conforms to the universal principle that all things are composed of Yin and Yang, signifying harmonious coexistence. It also implies that husbands (Yang) and wives (Yin) should maintain a harmonious and intact family after marriage, and possesses the geomantic effect of protecting residences. Additionally, it symbolizes prosperity in livelihood and production, as well as abundance of talents and wealth.

Vertically arranged Yin-Yang Fish represent positivity and upward vitality, the integration of Heaven and Earth, and the harmony between humanity and nature. The lower Taiji Diagram embodies attributes of tranquility, introversion, and gentleness, conveying the implied meaning of the intercourse of Heaven and Earth, bringing health, peace and perfect bliss.

Notably, four-eyed and four-colored Taiji Diagrams can often be seen on door ornaments and gable parapets of traditional folk residences. The fish bodies adopt four hues: emerald green, earth red, cream beige, and dark black. Except for the red fish with a red pupil and no black rim, the other three fish feature black pupils encircled by black rings. This design is closely associated with the Five Elements and Five Colors theory, pursuing Five Elements harmony with the surrounding geographical environment—including nearby stream banks, terraced land, and mountain formations.

Such patterns also incorporate stylized tiger faces symbolizing majestic vitality, as well as agile and powerful leopard foreheads, brows and canine teeth. Suspended beneath the leopard's fangs is a Taiji Diagram. In Chinese, the pronunciations of tiger and leopard are homophonic with blessings and good fortune. Combined with the Taiji Diagram, they symbolize the balance of Yin and Yang, universal harmony, lasting blessings, auspicious karma, and the fulfillment of all wishes.

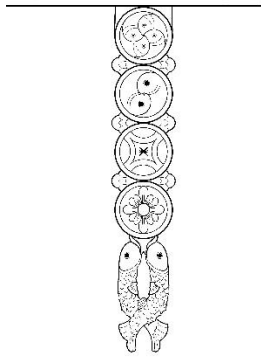


Fig.14-3-1 Painted Wood Carving of the Qing Dynasty: Combination of four-eyed Taiji, two-eyed Taiji, coin patterns, floral patterns and double fish. (The Chinese pronunciation of double fish carries an auspicious homophonic meaning, symbolizing wealth and accumulated savings.)

What makes it most distinctive is that decorative ornaments of some traditional residential buildings feature patterns of the Taiji Immortal. In the design, the Taiji Immortal wears an ornate crown and magnificent robe, with a ruyi scepter slung over the shoulder. The right hand holds the Taiji emblem high, while the left hand forms a ritual mudra. His left foot is raised to play with the Dog Star, which exhales celestial mist and three aligned stars from its mouth.

The Taiji Immortal is a patron deity of the heavens, endowed with extraordinary power and wisdom. The Dog Star is a divine creature symbolizing good fortune, wealth attraction, peace, and the dispelling of evil spirits. The alignment of three stars represents good luck, smooth sailing, and prosperity.



Fig.14-3-2 Qing Dynasty Wood Carving: The Taiji Immortal dances joyfully while frolicking with the Dog Star.

(4) Remedial decorative pattern of rhinoceros horn.

According to legend, burning rhinoceros horns during sacrificial rituals allows people to behold desired worldly forms as well as evil spirits, hence it is regarded as a sacred artifact. In the imagination of the ancients, rhinoceros horns possessed extraordinary powers of detoxification, spiritual communion, warding off evil spirits, subduing demons, and safeguarding peace.

In the decorative patterns of traditional residential buildings, rhinoceros horn motifs are shaped like cones or square pyramidal tips, presented as either a single horn or a paired double-horn combination.



Fig.14-4 Qing Dynasty Wood Carving: Combined pattern of a **whisk** and double rhinoceros horns.

(5) Town-house talisman plaque pattern.

Such wooden plaques for securing the residence are mostly placed on the shrine inside folk dwellings, in ritual halls, at the corner of the gable in ancestral halls, or on the beam framework of the porch and corridor of the main hall. They commonly take the form of double-sided wood carving with calligraphy.

One side is carved with the Taiji and Eight Trigrams, recording the feng shui orientation of the house as well as the evil-suppressing scales of the Lu Ban Ruler. The other side features evil-resolving and auspicious talismanic patterns, together with inscriptions invoking blessings from various deities to protect the clan and family.



Fig.14-5 Black-patterned wooden carved plaque of the Qing Dynasty: Combined patterns of the Eight Trigrams, Taiji and Taoist talismans.

(6) Talisman remedial decorative patterns.

Fuba pattern, also known as Taoba. Ancient people attached great importance to dispelling evil influences and defilements in folk residences. For instance, cicada-shaped hanging talismans were hung on the ridge beams and lamp frames of main halls and ritual halls; ink-written talisman-inscribed river pebbles were placed on the left ground or buried underground in ancestral halls and ritual halls.

A variety of talismans were adopted for feng shui remediation, including Ground-breaking Talisman, Beam-raising Talisman, Harmony Talisman, Healing Talisman, Livestock Protection Talisman, Wealth and Profit Talisman, House-protecting Talisman, Auspicious Blessing Talisman, and Official Rank & Prosperity Talisman.

When a house faces inauspicious geomantic conditions such as direct alignment with roads, street crossings, alley entrances, or opposite doorways of neighboring residences, targeted talisman remedial decorative patterns would be installed on door lintels, door beams and door top stones. They were also combined with gourd talismans to resolve evil spiritual clashes at the main gate of the courtyard, so as to ensure the prosperity of the clan.

Their functions are to eliminate illness and secure the residence, pray for good harvests, ward off disasters and misfortunes, grant smooth fortunes in daily life, and bring high official positions and generous emoluments.

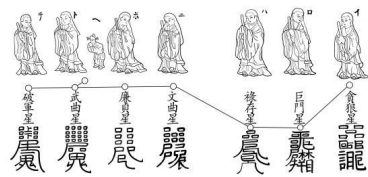


Fig.14-6 Qing Dynasty Line Drawing: Combined patterns of immortals and symbolic signs.

(7) Five Poisons remedial decorative patterns

The Five Poisons, also known as Five Essences, consist of centipede, gecko, spider, scorpion and snake.

A centipede is a multi-legged creature that remains resilient even when broken and enduring despite severe damage. Geckos are actually non-toxic. Spiders are also regarded as joyful auspicious insects in folk culture.

In the pattern, a bright full moon hangs in the sky, and a noble sage extracts venom from a scorpion.

In Chinese homophony, the character for poison (毒) sounds the same as alone (独), implying a noble person maintains virtue and self-discipline when alone. The close-up of the scorpion's hard carapace, with its stinger curved forward specially, symbolizes ranking first among all.

When paired with pangolin and tortoise shell, it signifies dominating a region with unparalleled strength. Scorpion sounds identical to bearing a noble son (携子), representing the arrival of blessed offspring and prosperous descendants for generations.

With numerous legs, the scorpion symbolizes wealth flowing in from all directions, smooth affairs and continuous success.

Ancient ancestors believed the Five Poisons could subdue all toxins and evil spirits, serving as amulets to protect dwellings. Decorating with Five Poisons aims to ward off evil and disasters, and safeguard permanent peace.

Centipedes eliminate pests in damp places, with powerful vitality and vigorous momentum, embodying yin-yang balance and overcoming evil with evil to ensure safety.

Scorpions paired with ingots, or scorpion pincers holding coins, represent great wealth and supremacy over worldly treasures.

To counter ominous influences at ancient building entrances, centipedes—the foremost of the Five Poisons—were carved on stone flagpoles and door lintels. By overcoming poison with poison, they turn misfortune into good luck, dispel evil calamities and eliminate all illnesses.

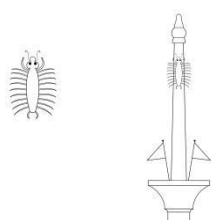


Fig.14-7 Qing Dynasty Stone Carving and Iron Art: Stone-carved flag base, iron-work centipede and triangular streamer.

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