

BUDDHIST PATTERNS IN CHINESE TRADITIONAL RESIDENCES

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The introduction of Buddhism into Chinese territory was a gradual process of infiltration, and the academic circle generally recognizes two core nodes: the informal dissemination at the folk level started in the first year of Yuanshou during the reign of Emperor Ai of the Western Han Dynasty (2 BCE). According to the annotation of Pei Songzhi in *Records of the Three Kingdoms·Book of Wei*, which quotes *Weilue·Biography of the Western Rong*, Yi Cun, an envoy of the King of Dayuezhi (a powerful nomadic tribe in Central Asia at that time), orally taught the *Sutra of Buddhism* to Jing Lu, a disciple of a doctor in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE, a unified feudal dynasty in ancient Chinese history). This is the earliest verifiable record of Buddhism's introduction in official history. The official formal introduction was marked by the *Yongping Pilgrimage for Dharma* in the tenth year of Yongping during the reign of Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han Dynasty (67 CE). Emperor Ming sent envoys to the Western Regions (the area west of the Yumen Pass in ancient China, an important part of the Silk Road) to invite two eminent monks, Kashyapa Matanga and Dharmaratna, back to China. The next year, he ordered the construction of the White Horse Temple, where the *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters* was translated. This marked that Buddhism was officially recognized by the Chinese Central Plains dynasty and began its systematic dissemination.

The popularization of Buddhism among Chinese people did not happen overnight. After the initial foundation laid during the Han and Wei dynasties (206 BCE – 265 CE), it entered a stage of rapid infiltration during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties (220 CE – 589 CE), and achieved full popularization in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581 CE – 907 CE). During the Han and Wei dynasties, Buddhism mostly attached itself to Huang-Lao thought (a philosophical school combining Chinese Taoism and Yin-Yang theory) and immortality techniques, and its dissemination was limited to the upper nobility and literati. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, social unrest intensified the Chinese people's crisis of faith. The core ideas of Buddhism, such as 'retribution for good and evil' and 'reincarnation', filled the spiritual void of the people. Coupled with the strong support of Chinese rulers, the prosperity of scripture translation and the promotion of the movement of seeking Dharma in the Western Regions, Buddhism gradually broke away from the attachment to immortality techniques and penetrated into Chinese folk society. The number of monks and nuns increased sharply, and the temple economy developed rapidly, laying the foundation for its popularization among the Chinese people. In the

Sui and Tang dynasties, Buddhism completed its Chinese localization transformation and formed native sects such as *Tiantai Sect*, *Zen Sect* and *Pure Land Sect*. Among them, the simple methods of Zen Sect ('transmitting outside the scriptures, not relying on words') and Pure Land Sect ('reborn in the Pure Land by reciting Buddha's name') greatly lowered the threshold of belief, promoting Buddhism to penetrate into all social strata and become one of the mainstream Chinese folk beliefs.

For the illiterate ordinary Chinese people, the reason why Buddhism could break through the language barrier to achieve widespread dissemination and attract them to become believers lies in its adaptive transformation from 'elite liberation' to 'saving all sentient beings', and the construction of a dissemination system that conforms to the cognition and needs of grassroots Chinese people. Firstly, the popularization of doctrines: Mahayana Buddhism abandoned the harsh practice paradigm of early Buddhism, transformed profound core concepts such as 'Nirvana' and 'Emptiness' into practical demands understandable to Chinese people, such as 'good deeds will be rewarded and evil deeds will be punished' and 'eliminating disasters and avoiding misfortunes'. Through miraculous legends and oral preaching, illiterate Chinese people could understand the core connotation of faith without studying Buddhist scriptures, turning Buddhism into a spiritual carrier for entrusting practical wishes. Secondly, the shaping of deified images: Mahayana Buddhism deified the Buddha from an 'enlightened one' into a protector with infinite supernatural powers, and abstracted Bodhisattvas from 'practitioners' into omnipotent gods with clear divisions of labor. For example, Guanyin Bodhisattva (Avalokiteshvara) is in charge of relieving suffering, Manjushri Bodhisattva (Manjusri) is in charge of wisdom, and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is in charge of saving beings in hell. These almost cover all kinds of practical needs in Chinese folk life. People only need to worship sincerely to pray for specific blessings 'targeted', without complex theoretical study. Thirdly, the promotion of simple practice methods: the extremely simple practice paths such as 'Buddha Recitation Method' allowed illiterate Chinese people who had no time for practice to obtain psychological comfort of 'external salvation' only by reciting Buddha's name, which greatly lowered the threshold of belief and was in line with the living scenes and spiritual needs of grassroots Chinese people.

In the context of being unable to express their faith by studying Buddhist scriptures, illiterate ordinary Chinese people took Buddhist patterns as a concrete carrier of faith expression and prayer for blessings. By decorating various Buddhist patterns on key parts of Chinese residential buildings such as doors, windows, beams, columns, walls, wood carvings and brick carvings, they realized their prayers for peace and happiness, which is also an important embodiment of the folklorization and daily life of Buddhism in China. These patterns are centered on Buddhist figures, dharma

instruments and symbols, and each pattern carries a clear connotation of praying for blessings, becoming a silent expression of faith for the Chinese people. Among the Buddhist figure patterns, Sakyamuni (the founder of Buddhism) symbolizes the highest wisdom and compassion; Dharma (Bodhidharma) implies warding off evil spirits and disasters, and perseverance; Guanyin Bodhisattva represents relieving suffering and peace; Maitreya Bodhisattva symbolizes openness, tolerance and longevity; the Four Heavenly Kings and the Eighteen Arhats imply protecting the family and eliminating evil spirits. The essence of decorating these patterns is that Chinese people entrust their protection demands to specific Buddhist images, realizing the visual expression of faith. Among the Buddhist dharma instrument and symbol patterns, the Eight Auspicious Symbols (Eight Buddhist Emblems) centered on *Dharma Wheel*, *Conch*, *Precious Umbrella*, *White Canopy*, *Lotus*, *Precious Vase*, *Goldfish* and *Endless Knot* each carry connotations such as perfect salvation, fame and reputation, protection and health, and purity. The Swastika pattern symbolizes boundless virtue and auspiciousness, and longevity. These patterns transform abstract prayers into perceptible spatial decorations through simple visual symbols, conveying the connotation of faith and good expectations without text interpretation. Through such decoration practices, Chinese people not only expressed their own faith, but also hoped to rely on the sacred connotation carried by Buddhist patterns to protect the peace of their homes, the health of their families and the smoothness of their careers, realizing the ultimate pursuit of a peaceful and happy life. At the same time, they also promoted the in-depth integration of Buddhist culture and Chinese folk residential decoration art.

1. Sakyamuni Pattern: Sakyamuni (563 BCE – 483 BCE), an ancient Indian thinker, educator and religious reformer, was the founder of Buddhism. His name means 'benevolent, tolerant, calm and caring for all beings'. He represents a pure, equal and enlightened mind, and symbolizes the supreme wisdom and compassion.



Fig.1: Colored painting of the late Tang Dynasty (618 CE – 907 CE): Sakyamuni sitting in cross-legged posture.

2.Dharma Pattern: Dharma (Bodhidharma, late 5th century – early 6th century), the first patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism. Legend has it that Dharma meditated facing the wall in Shaolin Temple in Henan Province of China for nine years. Common patterns include Dharma crossing the river on a reed, Dharma crossing the sea, and Dharma meditating facing the wall. Dharma had a clear mind, was free from desires, and saw through the world of mortals. He intended to eliminate all troubles, ensure smooth life and comfortable living; he could also resist all disasters and sufferings, implying turning danger into safety and warding off evil spirits and disasters. He is also a symbol of academic achievement, profound knowledge, ultimate enlightenment and spiritual perfection. In the picture: Dharma crosses the river on a reed in the river and sea. This pattern admonishes Chinese people that courage in the face of difficulties, perseverance and consistency are the guarantee of career success.



Fig.2: Pattern of the Qing Dynasty (1636 CE – 1912 CE): Dharma crossing the sea on a raft in rough waves.

3.Guanyin Bodhisattva Pattern: *Book of Northern Qi* written by Li Baiyao in the Tang Dynasty records: 'He said that he first saw a colorful object in the sky, which gradually approached and turned into a beautiful woman, standing several zhang (a traditional Chinese unit of length, about 3.3 meters) above the ground. After a meal, it turned into Guanyin.' During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 CE – 589 CE), Guanyin had both male and female characteristics; before the Song Dynasty (960 CE – 1279 CE), Guanyin was mostly male, and gradually turned into female in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 CE – 1279 CE). Guanyin has a gentle temperament, dignified demeanor, clear understanding of the world, and is the embodiment of relieving suffering, eliminating disasters, avoiding misfortunes, great compassion and saving all sentient beings. In the picture: Guanyin crossing the sea, with isolated coasts and several green peaks, like Putuo Mountain (one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China) lying like a dragon in the sea, where Guanyin is located; or Guanyin holding a pure bottle and standing on a lotus flower. Different shapes of Guanyin have different meanings: Guanyin with a dragon head decoration on the head

implies eliminating harm for the people, protecting people, living and working in peace and contentment, and the safety and health of descendants; Guanyin holding willow branches and a pure bottle symbolizes nectar sprinkling on the world, implying good weather and bumper harvests; Guanyin lying on a lotus leaf implies peaceful sleep, physical and mental health, and keeping a peaceful mind; Guanyin lying on a lotus leaf or lotus throne implies extraordinary bearing, generosity, responsiveness to prayers and success in all matters; Guanyin holding Buddhist scriptures implies the fulfillment of wishes, the completion of great achievements and success in examinations; Guanyin with a circular holy light on the back implies perfect thought, calmness and steadfastness; Guanyin sitting or playing on colorful auspicious clouds (a symbol of good luck in Chinese culture) implies rolling financial resources and prosperous business; Guanyin sitting cross-handed on a rock with a blazing flame halo behind has the function of subduing disasters and fire, relieving all internal and external sufferings of sentient beings and releasing their inner troubles; Guanyin holding a lotus flower, standing or sitting on a lotus leaf, or holding a lotus flower in both hands, indicates a pure and holy spirit; Guanyin of Sending Children, also known as Guanyin of Sending Children in White Robe, is an incarnation of Guanyin created by the Chinese people, indicating that Guanyin can meet all kinds of good wishes of sentient beings, bless them to have children if they pray, and relieve their sufferings; Guanyin with the right leg squatting, the left foot stepping lightly on a lotus leaf, and the left hand supporting the whole body, sitting freely on a Sumeru throne (a Buddhist sacred throne), is a symbol of profound wisdom.

The *Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin* has 'thousand arms' representing boundlessness and perfection, metaphorizing the boundless great compassion, and 'thousand eyes' representing the perfect wisdom without obstacles. It can also benefit and comfort all sentient beings, silently protect Chinese people through various difficulties, eliminate all diseases, make people more brilliant when luck is good, and eliminate all obstacles and disasters when luck is low, helping people get through difficulties smoothly and achieve a happy and auspicious life. The Chinese pronunciation of 'Guanyin' is the same as that of 'official seal', implying smooth work, successful career, prosperous official fortune and steady progress.



Fig.3: Colored painting of the Tang Dynasty: Guanyin walking calmly in rough waves.

4. Manjushri Bodhisattva Pattern: Manjushri Bodhisattva (Manjusri), the leader of all Bodhisattvas, symbolizes wisdom. He is regarded as the son of Sakyamuni Buddha, the 'Dharma King', and the left attendant of Sakyamuni Buddha. He wears a precious crown, has five buns on his head, wears Bodhisattva robes, holds a sword in his hand, and rides a majestic lion, combining longevity, sharp wisdom and powerful wisdom. In the picture: with Wutai Mountain (one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China, known as 'five peaks covered by clouds all year round') as the background, Manjushri holds a sword, carries a long-handled Ruyi (a traditional Chinese auspicious object symbolizing good luck), or holds a vajra sword in his right hand and a green lotus flower in his left hand, with a *Prajna Sutra* box on the flower, riding a green-faced lion. He is the embodiment of clever and perfect wisdom, a messenger of justice and compassion. Manjushri Bodhisattva can increase blessings, enhance memory, eliminate ignorance and clarify the true nature of all things. He symbolizes justice, courage, wisdom, outstanding literary talent and successful career, and is also a symbol of kindness and love.



Fig.4: Colored painting of the Northern Song Dynasty (960 CE – 1127 CE): Manjushri traveling around the world on a green lion.

5. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Pattern: Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the right attendant of Sakyamuni Buddha, contains the meanings of compassion, filial piety and wisdom. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva practices what he preaches, advising Chinese people to achieve real success, not to be empty-minded, but to do everything in person, becoming the embodiment of 'truth comes from practice'. In the picture: with Emei Mountain (one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China, known as 'higher than the five great mountains and the most beautiful in China') as the background, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva wears a five-Buddha crown, golden Bodhisattva robes, makes a wish-granting seal with his left hand, holds a sword in his right hand, and sits half-cross-legged on a six-tusk white elephant. Samantabhadra either sits on the elephant's back or appears in the world as a child immortal, implying protecting the peace of the world, fulfilling Chinese people's wishes, bringing happiness and unexpected gains, and at the same time eliminating villains and avoiding disasters and evils. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is the natal Buddha of people born in the Year of

the Dragon and the Year of the Snake (Chinese zodiac signs, which are an important part of traditional Chinese culture), so it is not excluded that some Chinese residential owners specially decorate Samantabhadra Bodhisattva according to their zodiac signs.



Fig.5: Colored painting of the Ming Dynasty (1368 CE – 1644 CE): Samantabhadra sitting on an elephant's back and carefully reading Buddhist scriptures.

6.Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Pattern: Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is named because he is 'as calm and steadfast as the earth, and as deep and secret as a treasure'. His great vow of 'If I do not enter hell, who will enter hell? Until hell is empty, I will not become a Buddha!' is worshipped by Chinese people. *Sutra of Sumeru* records that Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva who makes sentient beings have sufficient food and clothing, peace of body and mind, and saves them from all sufferings. In the picture: with the background of patterns implying 'thin and cold as cut in the air, clear and green light reflecting in the water', Ksitigarbha has a shaven head, kind eyes, a loving expression, holds a tin staff in his right hand and a mani pearl (a Buddhist sacred pearl symbolizing light and wisdom) in his left hand, looking like he is traveling around the world to save predestined sentient beings; or he wears a gauze hat, decorated with a few pearls, holds a mani pearl in one hand, and sits comfortably on the altar with a wish-granting seal, preaching seal or earth-pointing seal in the other hand.



Fig.6: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Ksitigarbha standing firmly on a lotus throne holding a tin staff.

7.Maitreya Bodhisattva Pattern: Commonly known as the Laughing Buddha with a Big Belly. *Biographies of Eminent Monks in the Song Dynasty* records: 'This monk's Dharma name is Qici. He was not good-looking, with a frowning forehead and a big belly, and his words were unpredictable. He slept everywhere, often carrying a cloth bag on his Zen staff, entering and leaving the market, begging for everything he saw and putting it into the bag, known as the Cloth Bag Monk of Changting.' Before the Tang Dynasty, Maitreya had two image types: Bodhisattva and Tathagata. He wore

Bodhisattva robes, had a long face, never smiled, and sat cross-legged. His shape was similar to that of Sakyamuni Buddha, both with spiral hair, but Sakyamuni had a usnisa (a protuberance on the top of the head symbolizing Buddha's wisdom) on his head, while Maitreya did not. During the Five Dynasties (907 CE – 960 CE), Maitreya appeared with a big belly and a smiling face. The Maitreya Buddha statue at Feilai Peak in Hangzhou of China in the Song Dynasty had a bald head, a big face, drooping eyes, a big smile, big ears hanging down to the shoulders, a bare chest and a big belly, wearing a cassock, pressing and protecting a big cloth bag with his left hand and holding a string of Buddhist beads with his right hand, known as the Cloth Bag Monk. This image of Maitreya has been used in Chinese residential decorations until now. Maitreya Buddha is compassionate, saves others and himself, tolerant, modest, kind-hearted and indifferent to fame and fortune. He symbolizes the tolerance, wisdom, humor and happiness of the Chinese nation, bringing Chinese people blessings, health, boundless longevity and continuous good luck, embodying Chinese people's good wishes for the future life. Maitreya has strong positive energy, which is a magic weapon to eliminate disasters and diseases, relieve worries and ensure people's peace.

Maitreya is compassionate, always smiling, humorous, intelligent, kind to others, optimistic and tolerant, unrestrained, patient, treats people with harmony, welcomes guests from all directions, and can tolerate the intolerable things in the world, so he is deeply respected and loved by Chinese people. In the picture: the round-shaped Maitreya, with a big smile and high spirits, implies harmony, cheerfulness, physical and mental health, long life, no worries and happy events; or the baby-faced Maitreya, commonly known as the Baby Buddha by the Chinese people, reflecting a Zen mind, a simple heart to face the complex world; or 'Five Boys Playing with Maitreya', with five boys playing around Maitreya, implying family joy or 'Five Sons Passing the Imperial Examination' (a traditional Chinese idiom meaning that all children achieve success in their studies); or combined with antique patterns, Maitreya sits on a couch, holding a bag in one hand and Buddhist beads in the other, with vases, flowers, books and other objects beside him, implying blessings, luck, harmony, joy and spiritual enlightenment; or Maitreya riding a lion, holding a gourd (a symbol of health and longevity in Chinese culture) tightly in his right hand, with cranes (a symbol of longevity) in the sky behind him, broken pomegranates (a symbol of more children and more blessings) and peach of immortality (a symbol of longevity) at his feet, the overall meaning is that the family is wealthy from generation to generation, with numerous descendants and longevity. The money bag in Maitreya's hand is a 'wisdom bag' and 'treasure bag', which gathers luck, aura and wealth from all directions, helping Chinese people to be smooth and prosperous.



Fig.7: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Maitreya sitting on a flower table holding Buddhist beads and a cloth belt.

8.Four Heavenly Kings Pattern: The patterns of the Four Heavenly Kings, the Dharma protectors of Buddhism, are mostly decorated on the beams and columns of the first hall of Chinese residential buildings, or on the murals of the gable walls of the ritual hall, intending to pray for the protection of the family by the Dharma of the Heavenly Kings. During the Five Dynasties, they were commonly known as the Four Vajras by the Chinese people; in the Ming Dynasty, *Investiture of the Gods* (a famous traditional Chinese novel) evolved them into the four Mo brothers and four divine generals. In the picture: under the willow tree, the 'Eastern Heavenly King of Protecting the Country' wears armor, stares angrily, and holds a pipa (a traditional Chinese musical instrument); under the ginkgo tree, the 'Southern Heavenly King of Growth' looks into the distance, holding a sword in his right hand and a jade ring in his left hand; under the pine tree, the 'Western Heavenly King of Wide Eyes' stares closely ahead, holding a snake in his right hand and a pearl in his left hand; under the osmanthus tree, the 'Northern Heavenly King of Wealth and Fame' smiles, opens his right hand and waves an umbrella in his left hand. This pattern represents good weather, spring growth, autumn harvest, winter storage and peace all year round. The pipa, a Dharma instrument, will lose its sound if the strings are too loose or break if the strings are too tight, admonishing Chinese people to behave in a moderate way and maintain harmony in everything; the sword implies diligent study and practice, improving one's morality, knowledge, wisdom, talent and ability to achieve perfection; the snake represents that people and things develop in change, and only by understanding the true meaning of things can we deal with them freely; the umbrella represents the unity of knowledge and action, containing the meaning of 'reading ten thousand books and traveling ten thousand miles', and only by putting what we have learned into practice can we make our career and family business perfect.

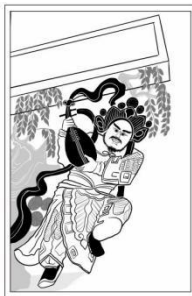


Fig.8-1: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Holding a ribbon pipa to practice Dharma with both hands.



Fig.8-2: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Holding a sword high in the right hand and a treasure ring in the left hand to practice Dharma.



Fig.8-3: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Holding a long snake in the right hand and a pearl tightly in the left hand to practice Dharma.



Fig.8-4: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Spreading five fingers to the sky with the right hand and holding a treasure umbrella tightly in the left hand to practice Dharma.

9. Eighteen Arhats Pattern: The ancient Chinese people had a special preference for the number 'eighteen', such as 'eighteen generations', 'eighteen marquises', 'eighteen scholars' and 'eighteen martial arts'. Among them, the Buddhist and Taoist, secularized Eighteen Arhats patterns are mostly decorated on the hall doors of Chinese residential buildings or the gable walls of the ritual hall. In the picture: under the clouds and dragons (symbols of imperial power and good luck in Chinese culture), the Eighteen Arhats gather together: the Arhat Subduing the Tiger, holding a golden ring high and riding on the back of a tiger, is full of strength and wisdom, fearless of difficulties and obstacles; the Long-Eyebrowed Arhat implies insight into the world, kindness and boundless longevity; the Arhat Holding a Ruyi high represents wisdom and meditation, bringing eternal good luck to Chinese people; the Arhat Holding a Bowl intends to beg for food to help people and care for all sentient beings; the Happy

Arhat shaking a treasure fan represents purity and freedom from worries; the Arhat Holding a Book implies extensive reading and profound knowledge; the Arhat Holding a Buddhist Scripture represents inheriting and carrying forward the classics; the Arhat Leaning on a Tin Staff represents correct practice and solving doubts; the Arhat Holding a Precious Pearl symbolizes wisdom and wealth; the Arhat Holding a Fly Whisk represents dispelling worries; the Arhat Holding a Dragon-Subduing Staff symbolizes the power to subdue evil; the Deer-Sitting Arhat holding deer antlers represents encouraging learning and practice; the Pagoda-Holding Arhat represents protecting Buddhism; the Happy Arhat holding a treasure fan represents happiness; the Arm-Raising Arhat holding a Ruyi symbolizes good luck; the Arhat Holding a Child implies the endless inheritance of Buddhism and unchanging care for the world; the Free-Spirited Arhat holding a gourd symbolizes spreading blessings and prosperity all over the world; the Cloth Bag Arhat holding a bag symbolizes tolerating all things; the Arhat Holding a Bell admonishes Chinese people to stay alert, behave wisely and not be disturbed by external troubles. Decorating these patterns in Chinese residential buildings is intended to encourage family harmony, brotherhood, sincere cooperation, eliminate all worries, resist all difficulties, live a simple and happy life, and make students confident and strong, concentrate on self-cultivation, have outstanding abilities, obtain high official positions and generous salaries, live a peaceful life, and have a successful career. In addition, it also protects the family from danger and subdues evil spirits. .



Fig.9: Colored painting of the Qing Dynasty: Eighteen Arhats.

10.Hehe Two Immortals Pattern: Hehe Two Immortals were famous monks in the Tang Dynasty of China, named Hanshan and Shide. The ancient Chinese people regarded them as gods of blessing and love, symbolizing happy marriage, family harmony and reunion. The reason why the ancient Chinese people loved 'harmony' (He) and 'unity' (He) comes from Mencius' (a famous ancient Chinese philosopher) saying: 'Opportunities of time are not as good as advantages of situation, and advantages of situation are not as good as harmony among people.' It also tells Chinese rulers that only by governing the country with benevolence can the world be stable; it admonishes Chinese people that only by harmony between people can

society and families be stable; 'When people are of one mind, they can move mountains', and everything can be successfully completed. They are the gods of marriage and popularity, the 'gods of love' symbolizing friendship, and the embodiment of harmony in marriage, filial piety and fraternity in Chinese folk culture.

In the picture: Hehe Two Immortals are always smiling, with square faces, big ears, childlike faces and fat bodies, stepping on auspicious clouds, with a fairy-like demeanor. Hanshan has a childish look, wears a loose red robe over his shoulders, bares his chest and back, has disheveled hair, and holds lotus flowers, lotus leaves, or fairy grass, orchids, or lilies high in his hands; Shide has two ball-shaped flower boy knots on his head, wears colored ribbons around his body, holds a round box in his left hand and opens the box cover with his right hand. Inside the box are auspicious fruits such as pomegranates, longans, Buddha's hands (a fruit symbolizing blessing) and peaches of immortality, and several bats (a symbol of blessing in Chinese culture, whose pronunciation is the same as that of 'blessing') are rising in the fairy air. This pattern symbolizes the harmony of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (the three major traditional cultures in China), reflects the Chinese Confucian ethics of loyalty, filial piety, integrity and righteousness, and sacrificing one's life for righteousness, and also contains the belief in the Three Stars of Blessing, Emoluments and Longevity, and the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues (the core of Chinese Confucian ethics). Sometimes they are depicted as elderly people with fairy-like demeanor, traveling through wind and rain, combined with Taoist priests refining elixirs in deep mountains and old forests of China, to reflect the harmonious response between man and nature. The combination of Hanshan, Shide, Liuhai and Tieguai Li (two famous immortals in Chinese Taoism) symbolizes four joys and four immortals blessing longevity. Among them, the elixir in Tieguai Li's gourd can cure all diseases and make people live forever; Liuhai brings financial fortune and longevity; or Hanshan carries a huge lotus flower on his shoulder, Shide rides on a deer (a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture) with a Ruyi in its mouth, holds a box in his right hand, and auspicious clouds drift out of the box, with a phoenix (a symbol of prosperity and auspiciousness in Chinese culture) turning back and spreading its wings in the clouds, symbolizing wealth, harmony, blessing and emoluments.



Fig.10: Wood carving of the Qing Dynasty: Hehe Two Immortals dancing between heaven and earth.

11. Feitian (Flying Apsara) Pattern: Feitian, also known as 'Heavenly Music God', 'Music God' and 'Flying God', is one of the 'Eight Heavenly Dragons' in Buddhism. It comes from Buddhist scriptures, with the Sanskrit names 'Gandharva' and 'Gandharva'; also known as 'Fragrance Sound God' or 'Fragrance Shade God', which means 'not eating meat and wine, only smelling fragrance'. It is a rare auspicious pattern in Chinese residential buildings. In the picture: Feitian flies in the sky, holds musical instruments and dances gracefully, symbolizing joy and auspiciousness.



Fig.11: Brick carving of the Tang Dynasty: Feitian holding honeysuckle branches.

12. Sudhana Boy Pattern: Sudhana Boy is a boy who faithfully guards Guanyin Bodhisattva. He does not value the throne, does not covet wealth and treasures, does not seek fame and fortune, and focuses on physical and mental purity, which is loved by Chinese people. In the picture: Sudhana kneels down to worship an elder selling incense, and on the antique shelf in the hall are displayed furnishings such as stoves, tripods, mortars, knives, saws, axes, and incense utensils. It implies that incense can help Chinese people perceive the mystery of the sense of smell, develop their own wisdom and cultivate the virtue of a gentleman. It also means that Sudhana Boy brings blessings to the Chinese world and brings happy events that benefit all sentient beings.



Fig.12: Colored painting of the Ming Dynasty: Sudhana Boy worshipping Guanyin with his hands clasped.

13. Buddhist Dharma Instrument Pattern: Also known as the Eight Auspicious Symbols Pattern or Eight Buddhist Emblems, it is a unique Dharma instrument symbol of Buddhism, consisting of *Dharma Wheel*, *Conch*, *Precious Umbrella*, *White Canopy*, *Lotus*, *Precious Vase*, *Goldfish* and *Endless Knot*.

① Dharma Wheel: Also known as the Golden Wheel. The round Dharma Wheel represents perfection, consisting of hub, spoke, rim and edge. The hub represents precepts, and the eight spokes represent the right path. It contains the meanings of breaking through, rolling forward, perfection and unceasingly saving all sentient beings. The center of the wheel is decorated with a lotus throne with sixteen lotus petals or lotus petal patterns, and a swastika pattern is pasted on it, symbolizing the ability to quickly grasp the key to success. It wishes Chinese families continuous good luck, perfection, long and smooth career.

② Conch: There are left-handed and right-handed conchs. The spiral direction of conchs is related to sea waves and sunlight; most are left-handed, and right-handed ones are very rare, so they are very precious. The right-handed conch, also known as the Dharma conch, is said by the Buddha to have the wonderful sound of Bodhisattva fruit and auspiciousness; the right-handed white conch represents the three neck lines of the Buddha, symbolizing that the sound shakes all directions. The sound blown by the conch can spread to a very far place, representing fame and bringing Chinese people a good reputation. The right-handed white conch is the most respected, regarded as a symbol of fame spreading all over the three worlds, and the Dharma sound that saves all sentient beings endlessly from generation to generation.

③ Precious Umbrella: Also known as the Canopy, it is a flat-top cylindrical umbrella covering the Buddha statue, with different textures, such as silk, wood or metal. The Precious Umbrella evolved from the dust-proof umbrella used by ancient Chinese kings when traveling. As a solemn ornament of the Buddha, its meaning is 'where the Buddha goes, I go; where the Buddha stays, I stay'. It protects all sentient beings from temptation and helps them overcome fear. It represents that 'Buddhism operates and spreads freely and unimpededly'. Its ability to open and close freely means that it covers Chinese people harmoniously and is a symbol of protecting all sentient beings.

④ White Canopy: Also known as the Victory Banner, it is cylindrical and cannot be opened or closed like an umbrella. It often appears in the patterns of processions of great men, top scholars (the first place in the imperial examination of ancient China) and carriages. It symbolizes eliminating all troubles and demons, implying success in every battle and complete victory; it can protect all sentient beings from troubles, pains and obstacles in reincarnation.

⑤ Lotus: Represents the Buddha's tongue, with the charm of good luck and good fortune. The lotus symbolizes purity and holiness, representing a pure mind; it also symbolizes treating others with a kind and pure heart, and winning the appreciation, respect and love of others with natural inner beauty in Chinese interpersonal communication.

⑥ Precious Vase: It is a treasure that is perfect in blessing and wisdom, symbolizing the achievement of success. There are peacock feathers and Ruyi trees inserted in the vase, which symbolize auspiciousness, gathering wealth without leakage, perfect blessing and wisdom, and eternal life; the Ruyi tree in the Precious Vase symbolizes purity, financial fortune, boundless blessings and longevity for Chinese families.

⑦ Goldfish: Also seen as a pair of fish. It represents the Buddha's eyes, looking kindly at all sentient beings, and is a symbol of wisdom. It also symbolizes vitality, health, and the function of warding off evil spirits and attracting good luck in Chinese folk culture. Fish swim freely in the water, implying liberation beyond the world, freedom and openness, and symbolizing freedom, transcendence, wealth and harmony. A pair of male and female goldfish symbolizes liberation, recovery, eternal life and rebirth.

⑧ Endless Knot: Also known as the Auspicious Knot. It is said to have evolved from knot writing, or invented by Fuxi in the late Paleolithic Age or Shennong in the middle Neolithic Age of China. *I Ching-Xici Xia* records: 'In ancient times, people governed by tying knots; later, sages replaced them with writing.' The Endless Knot is a variant rhombus geometric pattern formed by ten straight lines winding and connecting. Its characteristics are no head or tail, no beginning or end, winding and interlocking, unimpeded and continuous. Its appearance is like two swastika patterns intersecting, meaning 'circular and penetrating, all clear'. The headless and tailless knot, shaped like a tray, is also called the 'lucky plate', which can provide Chinese people with continuous good luck, and it is eternal, symbolizing the endless flow of life, the continuity of harmony and happiness, the continuous flow of financial fortune, the long reproduction of descendants, and good luck always surrounding the family, with endless blessings, emoluments accompanying the family from generation to generation. The Chinese pronunciation of 'Chang' (endless) is the same as that of 'Chang' (intestine), implying endless years. The Endless Knot is often combined with

peony (a symbol of wealth and nobility in Chinese culture), coins (a symbol of wealth), bats and goldfish, implying 'endless wealth and nobility', the gathering of all things, constant good luck, peace and harmony, and happiness and prosperity. It is also seen that the Endless Knot is combined into the shape of a gourd, implying that the fortune of blessing and emoluments is eternal; it also represents the literacy and virtue of good Chinese women, a good marriage, eternal love and a long life together. Some Endless Knots are combined into a regular seal script character 'Shou' (longevity), implying good health and eternal youth. The Endless Knot has dense sections, interlocking, circular and penetrating, without beginning or end, symbolizing the unity of mind and matter, eternal existence. It contains the meanings of forming associations, making oaths of brotherhood, and unity, encouraging Chinese people to unite around the family, observe rules, keep promises, and associate with people of high moral character.



Fig.13: Colored painting of the Qing Dynasty: Precious Umbrella, Goldfish, White Canopy, Lotus, Conch, Endless Knot, Precious Vase and Dharma Wheel.

14.Swastika Pattern: The Swastika pattern is the trajectory of the Big Dipper rotating once, representing the endless cycle of spring, summer, autumn and winter, and also a symbol of the Buddha's heart shining on the world. It appeared in ancient India, Persia, Greece and other countries about 7,000 years ago, and clear swastika patterns were decorated on Majiayao painted pottery 4,500 years ago (Majiayao culture is an important Neolithic culture in ancient China). During the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 CE – 534 CE), a Buddhist scripture translated it as the character 'Wan' (meaning ten thousand); during the Tang Dynasty, Xuanzang (a famous monk who went to India to seek Dharma from China) and others translated it as 'De' (meaning virtue), emphasizing the boundless merit of the Buddha. Buddhism holds that the swastika pattern is an 'auspicious sign' appearing on Sakyamuni's chest, implying boundless virtue and auspiciousness. In the second year of Changshou in the Zhou Dynasty of the Tang Dynasty (693 CE), Wu Zetian (the only female emperor in Chinese history) designated the pronunciation of the swastika as 'Wan', and it was designated as a symbol of the sun and fire, 'the gathering of all auspiciousness' and all auspicious merits in the world. In the picture: the combination of the swastika and a tripod (a traditional Chinese ritual vessel symbolizing power and auspiciousness) symbolizes all wishes coming true; the combination with 'Shou' (longevity), 'round Shou' and

ganoderma (a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture) symbolizes boundless longevity. In ancient times, it was used as an auspicious symbol, spell and amulet in Chinese folk customs.



Fig.14: Pattern of the late Ming Dynasty: The combination of the swastika and ganoderma, implying boundless longevity.

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