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## Loong Patterns in Ancient Dongyang Houses: Cultural Significance and Morphological Development

Guo Xiaotian<sup>1</sup>, Faridah Sahari<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*This study examines the physical evolution and cultural symbolism of the Loong designs found in Dongyang's historic homes. Chinese Loongs are very distinct from Western dragons and are significant in traditional culture. The study examined its application distribution, Loong pattern types (Kui, Chi, etc.), and architectural aspects (layout, structure, decoration, etc.). Combining the shifts in the artistic qualities and cultural significance of Loong patterns over time, from mysterious and authoritative to royally exclusive, with the morphological evolution of Loong patterns from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, such as the Shang and Zhou Kui Loong patterns, the Qing Dynasty Chi Loong pattern, and other corresponding characteristics. The conclusion demonstrates that the Loong pattern of Dongyang ancient dwellings is an important part of traditional architectural decorative art, carrying profound cultural significance. This is achieved by combining the morphological evolution of Loong patterns from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, such as the Shang and Zhou Kui Loong patterns, the Qing Dynasty Chi Loong pattern, and other respective characteristics, with the changes in the artistic characteristics and cultural significance of Loong patterns in different periods, from mysterious and authoritative to royal exclusive, etc. Its development is important for understanding historical culture and passing down architectural ornamental art, and it reflects aesthetic and social shifts.*

### Introduction

#### The significance of Loong Patterns in Chinese traditional culture

Loong in Chinese The Loong holds a significant place in Chinese mythology and is frequently seen as a representation of imperial authority. It is revered in Chinese culture as a sacred animal that represents strength, wisdom, and good fortune. The emperor refers to himself as the "True Loong Son of Heaven"; it is strongly associated with nature and is thought to have the ability to regulate rainfall, water, and even agricultural development (Xie, 2023).

Chinese Loong differ greatly from Western dragons in terms of their meaning, look, and culture. These distinctions can be seen in the East and the West's disparate cultural backgrounds and ideals in addition to how they look and behave. Thus, the term "Loong Pattern" instead of "Dragon Pattern" is more appropriate for the Chinese Loong pattern. Mascherman, a British missionary, had previously used the word "Loong" when he translated "The Analects of Confucius" in 1814.

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<sup>1</sup> First communication unit: Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Kota Samarahan 94300, Sarawak, Malaysia; [Domenico0523@Gmail.com](mailto:Domenico0523@Gmail.com). Second communication unit: Zhejiang Guangsha Vocational and Technical University of Construction, Dongyang 322100, Zhejiang, China; [Domenico0523@Gmail.com](mailto:Domenico0523@Gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Kota Samarahan 94300, Sarawak, Malaysia; [sfaridah@unimas.my](mailto:sfaridah@unimas.my).



### **Purpose and significance of the study**

In order to fully understand the cultural symbolic value of Loong patterns in Dongyang ancient houses and investigate their significant role in traditional Chinese society, the research of the symbolism and morphological evolution of Loong patterns in traditional Chinese culture is being conducted. Through the morphological evolution of Loong patterns, this study examines their creative style and shows how these patterns change throughout time. This study has significant cultural value and practical significance in addition to aiding in the understanding of the Dongyang area's development and even Chinese social history. It also offers a scientific foundation for the preservation and restoration of historic homes and encourages the sustainable development and sensible use of cultural heritage.

The research is important because it contributes to the study of Chinese art history, particularly in the area of architectural decoration, by preserving traditional architectural decorative art. It encourages the study and sharing of Chinese traditional cultural symbols both domestically and internationally, offers creative components for contemporary design, and strengthens the influence of Chinese traditional culture globally. The growth of regional cultural tourism and other industries is further aided by the research and promotion of the dragon patterns seen in Dongyang's historic houses. As an illustration of its potential worth in social and economic development, the design of local Loong pattern souvenirs stimulates economic growth in the area.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Cultural Differences between Chinese Loong and Western Dragon**

The Chinese Loong is primarily depicted as being long and snake-like, with a wide range of variations. Its four limbs and wings occasionally show up and occasionally vanish in various Loong patterns (Figure 1-1). (Shi & Liu, 2024)(Lin, 2023); the Loong's head resembles the scales of fish, the antlers of deer, the eyes of tigers, and the snout of cows (Figure 1-2). (Ma, 2024); they are typically shown as being able to move freely in the water and flying in the clouds.



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Feathered Man Playing with Loong  
Southern Dynasty  
Liu Danyi (illustrator)

The Eastern Classic of the Great  
Wilderness by Hu Wenhuan  
Ming Dynasty

Figure 1-1: Image of Chinese Loong  
Source: Left—Shi & Liu (2024); Right—Lin (2023)

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Figure 1-2: Detail of the Loong head on the screen of "Seated Statue of Emperor Shizong of Ming Dynasty"  
Source: Ma (2024)



Figure 1-3: Winged, four-legged dragon  
Source: Daniel Ogden (2021)

Western dragons generally have huge bodies, strong limbs and large wings. Their appearance is closer to reptiles, with hard scales, sharp claws and the ability to breathe fire (Figure 1-3) (Daniel, 2021) (Athanasius Kircher, 1678). Western dragons are usually depicted as living in caves or mountaintops, threatening surrounding villages and humans.

### **The Cultural Background and Symbolic Meaning of Loong Patterns**

#### **The Cultural Background and Symbolic Meaning of the Chinese Loong**

The Chinese Loong, which is frequently found in significant historic structures like Beijing's Forbidden City's Nine Loong Wall, is a symbol of power and dignity (Wang,1991).During important events like the Spring Festival, Loong dances are done as a sign of good fortune and auspiciousness. It coexists peacefully with the environment and is a representation of favourable weather and bountiful harvests, as seen by events like the Loong Boat Festival dragon boat race and the Spring Festival Loong dance (Zhang,2020).According to some academics, theocracy worship, totem worship, and spiritual worship have all been incorporated into Loong worship (Xu, 2007).

#### **The cultural background and symbolic meaning of the Western dragon**

Western dragons are typically depicted as malevolent beings in European myths and legends. Dragons are frequently knights' and monsters' adversaries in mediaeval European tales that must be vanquished. In the West, dragons are frequently invoked to represent evil and destruction. Legend has it that they are guardians of a great deal of treasure (Daniel Zhang CZIRÁKOVÁ, 2023). Western dragons, which stand for evil and devastation, are frequently viewed as adversarial and objects that must be subdued. The young hero vanquishes the malevolent dragon that threatens the community in Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil. To demonstrate his courage and righteousness, the warrior and hero must defeat the dragon, who is his adversary. Western dragons have historically been primarily shown in negative ways, but certain contemporary cultures—like the film "How to Train Your Dragon"—have started to offer them more positive symbolic meanings.

### **Research Methods**

#### **Field research**

To guarantee the completeness and correctness of the data, this study integrated field research, historical document analysis, and art history materials during the data collection phase. Rich

first-hand materials for comparative study were gathered through field trips to historic structures in various locations, where a variety of wood carving designs were noted and photographed together with pertinent historical records and artwork.

Gather first-hand information, document and take pictures of the intricate features of wood carving patterns, and conduct field research on historic structures. This technique allows for the direct observation and detailed documentation of the real state of wood carvings, including important details like the pattern's precise form, distinctive stylistic traits, and extent of deterioration. These resources are invaluable for conducting in-depth studies on the art of ancient architecture wood carving.

Representative historic structures in Dongyang, Zhejiang Province, including as "Lu's House," "Yiyi Hall" in Lizhai Village, "Shende Hall" in Xiachengli Village, and "Derun Hall" in Xiashitang Village, were chosen as research sites for this project. The history of these historic structures dates back to 1456 and ends in 1905. The wood carving art is excellent, and the evolution of Loong patterns is fairly advanced. They serve as excellent models for learning about traditional wood carving techniques. The creative style and craft qualities of wood carving patterns can be better understood and grasped by field trips to these areas, providing a strong basis for further research.

### **Literature Research**

This study thoroughly examines the historical context, cultural relevance, and manufacturing process of wood carving patterns using the literature research approach. Historical documents, art history, local chronicles, and other sources were consulted in order to establish the cultural backdrop and historical context of wood carving patterns. To ensure the thoroughness of the research, the literature search strategy employed in this study included databases like SCOPUS, Google Scholar, and CNKI, as well as manual searches of particular museum databases, journals, and monographs using keywords like "Loong pattern," "Chinese dragon," "wood carving," and "Dongyang." To ensure that the study is up to date with the most recent academic accomplishments, the search time range is restricted to 2019–2024.

The material that was not pertinent to the research issue was first weeded out of this study by screening abstracts and titles. To make sure that only high-quality research were included in this analysis, the remaining literature was thoroughly studied and then further selected according to how relevant the content was to Loong patterns. In terms of data extraction and analysis, this study took information from the chosen literature about pattern interpretations in porcelain and furniture, including details like the pattern's origin, sample size, and primary discovery sites. With the goal of investigating the cultural significance and morphological development of Loong patterns in Dongyang Ancient Houses, these samples were examined using the comparative analysis approach.

The literature research method has many drawbacks. For instance, publication bias—the possibility that some research findings won't be published—and database coverage may restrict the amount of literature that can be found. These restrictions imply that researchers should be aware of them when conducting their work and attempt to make up for them by gathering data from a variety of sources.

### **Comparative Analysis**

This study combined horizontal and vertical comparative techniques in its analysis. While the

vertical comparison followed the development of certain designs over time, the horizontal comparison concentrated on the parallels and discrepancies of wood carving patterns in various locations throughout the same time period. In order to further analyse the decorative qualities of the pattern in various building components, the study also precisely compared the same dragon decorative pattern on various object kinds and the application of several dragon pattern types on the same building component.

The distribution path, evolution mechanism, and formation process of regional features of wood carving patterns under various cultural and historical contexts are revealed by this study's multi-dimensional comparison research. In addition to advancing our knowledge of wood carving, the research findings offer a scientific foundation for preserving historic structures and traditional cultural heritage.

## **Loong Patterns in Dongyang Ancient Houses**

### **Architectural Features of Dongyang Ancient Houses**

Dongyang wood carving, stone carving, brick carving, sculpture, and other ornamental arts are characteristics of Dongyang culture. As the "hometown of architecture", the exterior is Taoist and the interior is Confucian. Additionally, it was one of Zhejiang Province's earliest "strong cities in architecture" and "hometown of Chinese architecture" (Zhang, 2019).

The following elements primarily represent the architectural characteristics of the old homes in Dongyang:

The traditional Chinese family concept and the value placed on seclusion are reflected in the courtyard arrangement that is typically seen in Dongyang ancient homes, with the central axis serving as the core and symmetrical on the left and right to form several courtyards.

The bracket technology, which increases the building's resistance to earthquakes, is a supplement to the timber frame structure, which is the primary load-bearing method used in Dongyang's old houses. Most of the roofs are shaped like hip, hanging, or hard mountains, showcasing their lovely curves.

The rich cultural past of the Dongyang area is reflected in the elaborate wood, brick, and stone carving techniques used in the decoration of the historic Dongyang homes. These carvings feature a variety of rich themes, such as people, flowers, birds, dragons, and phoenixes.

The majority of the materials used in Dongyang's historic homes are hard, rot-resistant woods like fir, camphor, and blue bricks or granite. Because these materials are used, the buildings are sturdy and long-lasting.

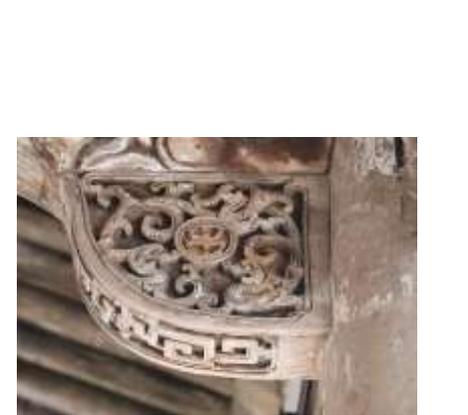
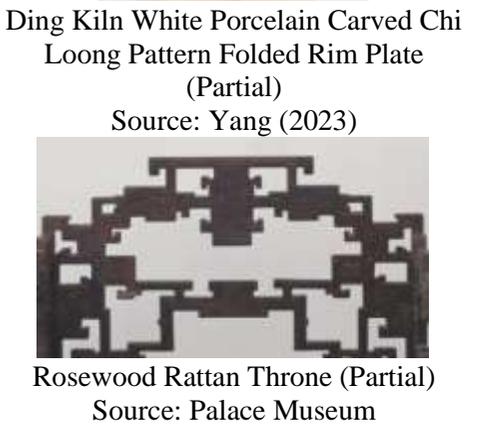
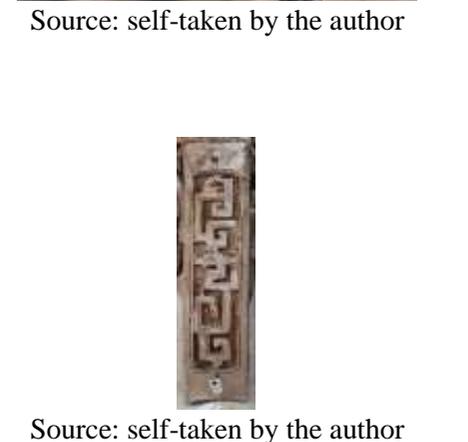
Ancient homes are designed to be as environmentally adaptable as possible, taking into account the local climate and topography. For instance, the roof's slope design facilitates drainage, while the wall's thickness preserves heat, demonstrating the environment's adaptability.

In addition to showcasing the fine craftsmanship of ancient craftsmen, these characteristics of Dongyang's historic homes also represent traditional Chinese aesthetic and philosophical ideas. They represent a priceless legacy of traditional Chinese architecture.

### **Types of Loong patterns in Dongyang ancient houses**

**(Kui Loong pattern, Chi Loong pattern, Guaizi Loong pattern, Cao Loong pattern, Loong Xu pattern, "three stops and nine similarities" style Loong pattern)**

Based on current research, the Loong patterns found in the wood carvings of ancient Dongyang houses include the "Three Stops and Nine Similarities" style Loong pattern (Ma, 2024), Guaizi Loong (Palace Museum), Cao Loong, Loong Xu pattern (Palace Museum), Kui Loong (Yang, 2023), Chi Loong (Yang, 2023), and others. Loongs on wood carvings have somewhat distinct shapes than those on other carriers, such as porcelain and furniture (Table 1-1).

Name	Complex	Dongyang Woodcarving
Kui Loong Pattern	 <p data-bbox="342 656 799 757">Jingdezhen Official Kiln Blue And White Kui Loong Pattern Vase (Partial) Source: Yang (2023)</p>	 <p data-bbox="842 600 1270 637">Source: self-taken by the author</p>
Chi Loong Pattern	 <p data-bbox="342 1071 799 1173">Ding Kiln White Porcelain Carved Chi Loong Pattern Folded Rim Plate (Partial) Source: Yang (2023)</p>	 <p data-bbox="842 1071 1270 1108">Source: self-taken by the author</p>
Guaizi Loong Pattern	 <p data-bbox="342 1513 799 1550">Rosewood Rattan Throne (Partial) Source: Palace Museum</p>	 <p data-bbox="842 1513 1270 1550">Source: self-taken by the author</p>

**Table 1-1: Application of Loong patterns**

**The application and distribution of Loong patterns in Dongyang ancient houses.**

Loong patterns are mostly utilised in certain structural elements of structures, such as simply

Cao  
Loong  
Pattern



Huanghuali Wood Basin Stand Inlaid With Various Treasures And Loong Patterns (Partial)

Source: The Palace Museum



Source: self-taken by the author

Loong Xu  
Pattern



Blue And White Loong-Patterned Vase (Partial)

Source: Palace Museum



Source: self-taken by the author

"Three  
Stops And  
Nine  
Similarities"  
Style  
Loong  
Pattern



Blue And White Animal-Faced Loong-Cloud Jar (Partial)

Source: Ma



Source: self-taken by the author

ornamental elements like Corbels and QinFang rafters and structurally demanding elements like Beams and Tiebeam.

Loong decorations on Corbels and Tiebeam are the most common among these elements, followed by Sparrow brace and QinFang. In contrast, Loong decorations on windows and beams are somewhat uncommon, particularly on beams, which are typically adorned with just one pattern—LoongXu patterns.

With the exception of beams, the crooked Loong pattern was the predominant Loong decoration style used in Dongyang buildings during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The ancient people did not employ three stops and nine similarities" style Loong pattern very often. It mostly showed up on more private areas, including the bedroom windows and the ox legs and beams in the back hall.

	Corbel	Qin Fang	Sparrow Brace	Beams	Tiebeam	Window
Kui Loong	●	●	●			

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Chi Loong	●	●	●	●	
Guaizi Loong	●	●	●	●	●
Cao Loong	●		●	●	
Loong Xu	●			●	●
Three Stops And Nine Similarities Style Loong		●		●	●

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## The Evolution of Loong Patterns

### The evolution of Loong patterns from the Shang and Zhou dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties

#### Kui Loong pattern

The Kui pattern was formerly a popular form of animal decorating throughout the Shang and Zhou periods. The Kui pattern, which is the primary indicator of animal adornment in slave culture, perfectly combines witchcraft with practical relevance in light of Shang Dynasty civilisation's low output. According to Song (2019), there is a certain amount of representational relevance for the investigation of the output level, royal consciousness, and artistic tendencies in early slave society.

There are many Kui Loong patterns on bronze ware from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. "Shuowen Jiezi" records: "Kui is a god, like a Loong, with one foot." "Shan Hai Jing Dahuang Dongjing" also records: "There is a beast on it, shaped like an ox, with a blue body and no horns, and one foot. When it enters or leaves the water, there will be wind and rain. Its light is like the sun and the moon, and its sound is like thunder. Its name is Kui." The Kuilong pattern is in a crawling posture, with an open mouth and a long snout upturned, a bent or straight body, and one or two feet (Figure 2-1) (Zhang, 2020).



Figure 2-1: Kui Loong pattern on bronze ware from the Shang and Zhou dynasties  
Source: Zhang (2020)

#### Chi Loong pattern

Chi Loong pattern, also known as "Chihu Loong", is a typical traditional Chinese decorative pattern. It is a decorative theme close to Loong pattern and a variant of Loong pattern. Its lines are simple and smooth. In terms of detail processing, the head, claws and tail of Chi Loong pattern have great changes.

《说文解字》"Shuowen Jiezi" by Xu Shen, written during the Eastern Han Dynasty, stated: “螭，若龙而黄，北方谓之地螭，从虫，离声，或无角曰：螭。” "Chi, like a Loong but yellow, in the north it is called Diluo, from the character for insect, with the sound of Li, or without horns is called Chi." It represents a dragon devoid of horns. Wei Zhao was cited in the "Book of Han Yang Xiong Biography" as saying, “螭，似虎而鳞。” "Chi, like a tiger but with scales." This indicates that the Chi dragon resembles a tiger with scales all over its body.

The Warring States Period, the Spring and Autumn Period, and the Qing Dynasty are when the Loong motif first emerged on bronze decorations and peaked (Chen, 2023). Curl arcs, fill squares, and embellish long edges with the Loong pattern. This explains why the Loong pattern has emerged as the most popular pattern motif. Almost every piece of furniture that could be ornamented featured the relief Loong motif, which was more commonly utilised during the Qing Dynasty. The Loong pattern—particularly the detached Loong pattern—became increasingly ornamental and symbolic in the middle and late Qing dynasty. The Loong's sense of animal life was diminished, while the pattern's ornamental sense was strengthened. The animal's limb image was weaker in terms of body shaping, showing a symbolic characteristic (Figure 2-2) (Qu, 2023)



Figure 2-2: Relief Loong Patterns On Furniture From The Qing Dynasty

Source: Qu (2023)

### 5.1.3 Guaizi Loong pattern

Ming and Qing furniture displays a variety of KuiLoong patterns, including variations known as "Guaizi Loong patterns," which are typically combined with Guaizi and cloud patterns. Additionally, there are Loong patterns whose heads take on the characteristics of other patterns, like Guaizi KuiLoong patterns with elephant trunk heads, Kuihu patterns, Kuifeng patterns, etc., and even KuiLoong patterns whose bodies are combined with other patterns (like curling grass patterns and flower branch patterns) (Qu, 2023).

Beginning in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the KuiLoong's body, legs, feet, and tail gradually lost their distinctions, and the decorations on their heads and bodies progressively became simpler or vanished altogether. The KuiLoong design grew more abstract and simpler in the late Qing Dynasty. With the exception of the head, which occasionally had a simplified image, the body was essentially abstracted into a single Guaizi shape, with the exception of some that had no ornamentation at all and turned into a pure "Guaizi" form (Figure 2-3) (Qu, 2023). Only circular hooks were adorned at the turning places.

In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, it gained popularity as a symbol of riches and a long line of ancestors (Pu, 2012).



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Figure 2-3: Loong Pattern On Furniture From The Qing Dynasty

Source: Qu (2023)

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The GuaiziLoong design has incredibly rich style variations along with intricate and varied features. Based on the features of its shape, it may be easily separated into two groups:

One is the design of a Loong with a head. This style of expression creates a continuous pattern by immediately integrating the Loong head with the volute pattern and the Loong tail with the curling grass design. Positive line carving can be used on this design to intensify its artistic effect, or it can be left unadorned to highlight its understated elegance.

The abstract Guaizi pattern is the other. The most prominent characteristic of this Guaizi design is the absence of the Loong head, which is substituted with motifs like square and circular hooks. This results in a distinct Guaizi pattern style that is neither a typical Hui pattern nor a pattern made of curly grass. Its shape is unusual and unique.

A type of continuous curved pattern on classic furniture with firm corners. It is known as "fragrant grass KuiLoong" if a Loong head is inserted and paired with twined flowers; otherwise, it is known as "Guaizi pattern" (Palace Museum).

### **Cao Loong pattern**

This prototype is the basis for all of the patterns on the Chi's body. Additionally, certain Chi Loong motifs—also referred to as "CaoLoong"—combine with curving grass patterns (Qu, 2023).

The ChiLoong lacks both scales and horns on its head and torso. With a lengthy tail and reptilian features, it more closely resembles a beast. It frequently appears in combination with other patterns, like the entangled lotus, curling grass, and tail with Guaizi pattern. Another name for it is the "Cao Loong" (Wang, 2008).

In the middle and late Ming Dynasties, the beast state gradually deteriorated, and the head, body, and legs gradually showed flat features, mostly showing side views, crawling or circling flying. In the early Ming Dynasty, the beast features were evident, and the head and body were primarily three-dimensional and crawling. Figure 2-4 (Zhou & Liu, 2020) (Tsinghua University Art Museum) shows the curling grass intertwined dragon design, which incorporates the curling grass, phoenix tail, and curling cloud patterns. extremely straightforward Cao Loong design. It is made up of a simplified Loong pattern on the Loong tail and a combination of a back pattern and a curling grass pattern on the Loong head.



Figure 2-4: Ming Dynasty Cao Loong Pattern

Source: Tsinghua University Art Museum

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### **Loong Xu pattern**

Usually, tiebeams and beams have LoongXu patterns carved on both ends. An arc-shaped carving on the moon beam extends from the arc connecting the two shoulders to the vertical surface of the beam. This carving is mostly made up of two negative carvings that descend, with a jutting ridge in the centre. From the bottom end of the beam head, they roll upward, getting progressively smaller and ending in a sharp tip. It's known locally as "shrimp whiskers" because of how much its appearance resembles shrimp whiskers.

The "Loong Xu" patterns, which are similar to shrimp whiskers, are also present in dragon whiskers. Known as "fish gills" patterns, the shape resembles fish gills. Following the doctor's hands, the arcs change from circles to ellipses to odd shapes, and the stripes get more and more varied. Sometimes a wave pattern is added, and the tip turns into a whip rope that is raised in the air (Zhang, 2019) (Figure 2-5).

The LoongXu design is rather straightforward and simple to recognise. There are two types of LoongXu patterns: single and double. It is frequently used with curled grass patterns in creative

forms. In order to prolong the overall design and emphasise the length-to-width ratio, curling grass patterns are frequently added to the end of the dragon beard pattern. This adds to the pattern's exquisite beauty.

The single LoongXu pattern at each end and the twin dragon whisker pattern at each end are the two types of LoongXu patterns carved on the beam (Figure 2-6). Using Yiyi Hall as an example, it is easy to observe that LoongXu designs are used to embellish nearly every section above the beam (Figure 2-7).

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Figure 2-5: Loongxu Pattern (Beam) During The Ming And Qing Dynasties

Source: self-taken by the author

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Figure 2-6: Loongxu Pattern (Tiebeam) During The Ming And Qing Dynasties

Source: self-taken by the author



Figure 2-7: Loongxu Pattern In Ming And Qing Dynasties

Source: self-taken by the author

### “Three Stops and Nine Similarities”Loong pattern

In the period known as the Song Dynasty, Guo Ru 《图画见闻志》 "Records of Paintings and Drawings" stated: “画龙者，析出三停，自首至膊，膊至腰，腰至尾也;分成九似：角似鹿，头似驼，眼似兔，项似蛇，腹似蜃，鳞似鱼，爪似鹰，掌似虎，耳似牛也。”“When drawing a Loong, one should separate the three parts, from the head to the shoulders, from the shoulders to the waist, and from the waist to the tail; and divide them into nine parts: the horns are like a deer, the head is like a camel, the eyes are like a rabbit, the neck is like a snake, the belly is like a clam, the scales are like fish, the claws are like an eagle, the paws are like a tiger, and the ears are like a cow." It's evident that the dragon possesses traits from a variety of creatures.

There were three-clawed, four-clawed, and five-clawed Loongs after the Song Dynasty. Whereas concubines' porcelain could only be painted with four claws, feudal emperors' porcelain Loongs had two sets of claws. Five-clawed Loongs first appeared during the Yuan Dynasty as a result of the emperors' monopoly and control over Loong patterns. As imperial power politics, the Loong pattern modelling entered the stage of stylised production. The Loong design becomes increasingly intricate until ultimately diminishing (Shi & Liu, 2024). During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, this type of Loong motif was more tightly associated with imperial authority. Mr. Wang Shixiang referred to it as the "conventional Loong pattern" in contrast to the more traditional Loong pattern (Figure 2-8).

"Three stops and nine similarities" Loong patterns style were quite common in furniture made during the Qing Dynasty. Round carvings with similar Loong patterns were frequently seen on mirror frame columns, bedposts, screen caps, and other surfaces. A sense of flair, complexity, and triviality were created by the sculptures' greater attention to detail, which emphasised how carefully each element of the Loong was carved (Qu, 2023).



Figure 2-8: Qing Dynasty Three-Claw Loong Pattern Window

Source: self-taken by the author

### **The artistic characteristics and cultural significance of Loong patterns in different historical periods**

With time Loong patterns' aesthetic qualities and cultural importance have changed as well. With its straightforward and enigmatic features, the KuiLoong pattern from the Shang and Zhou dynasties represents authority and mystery and is frequently found on bronze goods. Loong designs became increasingly vibrant and fluid during the Qin and Han dynasties, signifying the nobility and might of the imperial authority.

The Tang and Song dynasties saw a new height in the creative expression of Loong patterns, characterised by exquisite designs and profound meanings. Loong patterns throughout the Song Dynasty were distinguished by their slender bodies and forked antlers. The Yuan and Ming eras saw a secularisation of Loong designs. Loong patterns were rough and bold in the Yuan Dynasty and powerful and beautiful in the Ming Dynasty, when they were covered in flame patterns and typically adorned with ribbons on the chest. Loong patterns were restricted to the royal family

during the Ming and Qing dynasties. People primarily employed retro deformed Loongs as decorations, most commonly using crooked and grass Loong patterns and infrequently used "Three stops and nine similarities" Loong patterns.

The Cao Loong pattern's blend of curled grass and Loong symbolises people's desire for good fortune and contentment. Throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, the "three stops and nine similarities" dragon pattern—which embodies the power and grace of the Loong—became the norm for Loong patterns. These Loong designs have deep cultural symbolism that reflects the aesthetic preferences and social mores of their respective eras.

## Conclusion

In addition to being a significant component of traditional Chinese architectural decorative art, the Loong patterns seen in the ancient houses of Dongyang also vividly represent cultural symbolism and the evolution of morphology. The Loong patterns found in the ancient houses of Dongyang have deep cultural meaning; they stand for power, knowledge, good fortune, authority, and dignity. From the Shang and Zhou to the Ming and Qing dynasties, these patterns have developed over time, and their forms have progressively altered from magnificent and enigmatic to colourful and adaptable, and finally to the intricate and standardised Ming and Qing dynasties.

The ancient houses of Dongyang are home to a variety of Loong designs, such as the "Three Stops and Nine Similarities" and KuiLoong, ChiLoong, Guaizi Loong, CaoLoong, and LongXu patterns. These designs have distinct aesthetic qualities in addition to being mirrored in the building's structural elements, such as the tiebeams, beams, and corbel. For instance, ChiLoong exhibits decorativeness with its flowing lines and variety of forms, but Kui Loong represents authority with its simplicity and mystique. The patterns of Guaizi Loong and Cao Loong are more indicative of the people's desire for good fortune and contentment.

Loong designs have a cultural importance and creative qualities that are always changing with the times. Loong patterns have evolved to reflect changes in social characteristics and artistic trends over time. These include the mysterious authority of the Shang and Zhou dynasty, the vividness and flexibility of the Qin and Han dynasty, the beautiful meaning of the Tang and Song dynasty, the secular development of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and the royal exclusivity of the Ming and Qing dynasty. Loong patterns are not only a holdover from traditional architectural decorative art in Dongyang's ancient houses, but they also serve as a powerful window into the history and culture of the area.

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