A Comparative Study on the Patterns of Dragon Pattern Porcelain in the Qianlong and Guangxu Periods of the Qing Dynasty
--Taking the Blue and White Porcelain Plate with Dragon Patterns and Blue and White Shuanglong Playing with Beads Plate as Examples

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Abstract. Dragon pattern is an important historical culture in Chinese arts and crafts, and it is also one of the decorative patterns with the most cultural connotation in porcelain. Exploring the ancient Chinese dragon pattern can promote the research of Chinese art history and enhance the utilization of ancient art value. This paper takes the blue and white dragon pattern plate of Qianlong period and the blue and white Shuanglong playing pearl plate on Guangxu period as the representative of dragon pattern porcelain of the two periods to compare and analyze the historical background, line characteristics, color style and spatial layout. Through the research results, it's find that the dragon pattern porcelain patterns in the Qianlong and Guangxu periods of the Qing Dynasty were different due to the differences in the national strength of the Qing Dynasty, the social aesthetic differences and the national economic strength. It is concluded that the dragon pattern on the porcelain will appear in different styles in the same Dynasty due to different historical backgrounds.

Keywords: Dragon pattern; Porcelain; Qing Dynasty; Qianlong; Guangxu.

1. Introduction

The dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty occupies an important position in the ancient patterns of China, which is embodied in the cultural background and technological level of the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty. According to the literature records related to dragon pattern porcelain, dragon pattern is one of the most common decorative patterns in Chinese arts and crafts from ancient times to now, and also one of the eternal themes with the most cultural connotation in traditional ceramic patterns [1]. The Qing Dynasty inherited the traditional feudal autocratic monarchy. The emperor controlled the whole country and enjoyed supreme authority and dignity. The autocratic monarch embodied the macro control mechanism of society [2]. Dragon is a mythical product developed from the totem of ancient Chinese tribes and the spiritual sustenance revered by ancient people. In the Qing Dynasty, there were some differences in the patterns of dragon patterns in different periods. The dragon is often a manifestation of imperial power and can reflect the background of the times to a certain extent. The patterns on the porcelain are one of the important carriers of the ancient Chinese traditional culture. They all express their wishes with objects and paintings are intended to express the royal family's understanding of the world and their hopes for life. At the same time, they are also tools for their propaganda of feudal consciousness. In the folk, the dragon pattern is regarded by the ordinary people as the representative of virtue and strength, and has the meaning of auspiciousness and well-being. It is deeply loved by the people. Therefore, the dragon pattern often appears on porcelain. The reason for choosing the porcelain of Qianlong and Guangxu periods as a comparison is that the Qianlong period was a representative prosperous period of the Qing Dynasty. During the
Guangxu period, the national strength was weakened due to the invasion of China by the Eight Power Allied forces and the Boxer Movement, and the Qing Dynasty was on the verge of collapse.

At present, there are few comparative studies on the dragon pattern porcelain of the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty and the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty. The authors will analyze the two porcelain from the Qianlong and Guangxu periods from a more detailed perspective.

The comparative significance of selecting porcelain from the Qianlong and Guangxu periods is to explore the important historical information and aesthetic value of the Chinese ancient dragon patterns, which can be used for the cultural research of the Qianlong and Guangxu periods of the Qing Dynasty, and can also provide inspiration for modern design on Chinese style patterns. At the same time, it can also improve the research status of the influence of the historical background on the characteristics, artistic development and aesthetic differences of porcelain patterns, so as to explore the important historical information and aesthetic value of some ancient Chinese dragon patterns from small to large, and also help future generations to study the aesthetic, artistic development, porcelain development and social background of these two periods. Combing the development of the dragon pattern in the rise and fall of the Qing Dynasty can also serve as a basis for the later study of the aesthetic changes of the Qing Dynasty and the culture of the development of the past dynasties. The most prosperous period of the Qing Dynasty is a period when the Qing Dynasty began to decline, it is compared with the weakest period when the Qing Dynasty was on the verge of collapse. There was a great difference in national strength between the two periods of Guangxu and Qianlong, which resulted in the differences in the pattern, artistic expression and production technology of dragon pattern on porcelain.

This paper is mainly based on literature analysis, supplemented by content analysis. Through collecting, identifying and sorting out the literature, through the systematic analysis of the existing literature related to the Qianlong Guangxu dragon pattern, the information is obtained, and then the content is described objectively.

In terms of the structure division of the article, this paper first introduces the reasons for the prevalence of the dragon pattern in the Qing Dynasty and the significance of carrying it, and describes the characteristics of the blue and white dragon pattern plate in the Qianlong period and the blue and white Shuanglong playing pearl plate in the Guangxu period. Secondly, it explores the differences in the inheritance of the patterns in the two periods and the relationship with the social background. Finally, it summarizes the reasons for the differences between the two, and tries to analyze the historical and social factors in the evolution of the characteristics of the dragon patterns from the Qianlong period to the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty. It is hoped that this research can provide some contributions to scholars in related fields.

2. A Summary of the Characteristics of Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White Porcelain Plate with Dragon Patterns

2.1 Era Style of Cultural Relics

Qianlong was the most prosperous time in China's feudal history, and it was called "Qianlong prosperity" in Chinese history. The Qianlong period was a feudal society, the main production department of the feudal society was agriculture, and the greatest growth of agricultural productivity was the main symbol of the economic prosperity of the Qianlong period, which exceeded the level of previous dynasties. The increase of commercial cities and towns, the development of foreign trade, the state financial situation and the national treasury reserves have reached an unprecedented level [2]. It can be seen that at that time, people lived and worked in peace and contentment at home, and various industries were prosperous, especially handicrafts. Internationally, diplomatic missions from various countries came to Korea, and cultural exchanges were frequent. As far as ceramic decoration is concerned, the dragon pattern of this period has the magnificent momentum of the flourishing era, it's powerful and mostly decorated with flowers and grass patterns and wave patterns. The painting is complex and orderly, showing a prosperous scene. Therefore, the porcelain dragon patterns in the
early Qing Dynasty have rich themes and fine painting styles, which are comparable to the dragon patterns in the early Ming Dynasty.

2.2 Lines and Color Characteristics of Cultural Relics

The lines of the blue and white dragon pattern plate in Qianlong period are "soft" and "hard", cause it has the beauty of a round forehead and a sense of strength. The shape of the dragon pattern on the plate is "bow". The auxiliary pattern is lined with flame pattern, which is more complicated than the auxiliary pattern of cloud dragon pattern in the Kangxi period and slightly artificial. The line structure is bold and regular, reflecting the vigorous spirit of the dragon.

Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns has pure blue and white hair color, less color change, but more beautiful. The porcelain carcasses of the Qianlong period were thin or thick, homogeneously fine, moderately thick and thin, and neatly trimmed. The glaze is even, moist and firm. The color material has strong glass quality, like paint and glue, and is bright and colorful. The color of the color material is the same as that of the copper body and the material body enamel [3].

3. A Summary of the Characteristics of Chinese Qing Dynasty Guangxu Blue and White Shuanglong Playing Pearl Appreciation Plate

3.1 Era Style of Cultural Relics

In the late Qing Dynasty, including Guangxu, with the declining social environment, the arts and crafts also showed a gradual decline, resulting in simpler and rough dragon pattern, which became simple and rigid. However, its style characteristics did not fade, and the public can still see the solemn and honest feeling of the dragon pattern in the Qing Dynasty. Throughout the Qing Dynasty, this period is still a milestone in the development of the dragon pattern in Chinese history, and the whole style of the dragon pattern is also vividly reflected at this time. In terms of meaning, the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty also played a very good role in the inheritance and development of the dragon pattern.

The blue and white patterns of Guangxu folk kilns are mostly loose in layout, unclear in level, and careless in painting. The motif is often the content with auspicious meaning, although the decoration of the official kiln is mainly traditional, there are innovations in the cloth and design. Most of the patterns are smooth and vivid, sweeping away the dull and sour atmosphere since Tongzhi [4].

3.2 Lines and Color Characteristics of Cultural Relics

For Chinese Qing Dynasty Guangxu Blue and White Shuanglong Playing Pearl Appreciation Plate, the dragon pattern is lined with flame patterns and clouds. However, the design and description of the patterns are simple and rough, the lines of the dragon pattern are rounder and more disordered.

The curl of the dragon pattern of the blue and white Shuanglong playing with beads in Guangxu is less than that of the blue and white dragon pattern in Qianlong, which shows that the body of the dragon pattern is rigid. The Dragon scales on the body are first drawn into a network, and then small dots are added to save energy and technology. The Dragon fins are sparser than the blue and white dragon patterns of Qianlong. Moreover, the swinging posture of the dragon body is very rigid, and it is no longer the image of the supreme emperor. The blue and white colors of Guangxu are diverse, but they are all light and gray, with the characteristics of the blue and white color materials of the late Qing Dynasty.
4. The Difference between Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White Porcelain Plate with Dragon Patterns and Chinese Qing Dynasty Guangxu Blue and White Shuanglong Playing Pearl Appreciation Plate

4.1 Cultural Relics Pattern Lines

Based on the above information, the appearance of dragon pattern will be compared and analyzed below. In the Guangxu period, fine lines and extensive lines coexisted, but the strokes were rigid and dull [5]. The patterns of the Qianlong period are very clear [6]. From the lines, the dorsal fin of the dragon pattern on the blue and white Shuanglongs playing with the beads is short columnar with round and disordered lines, while the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns pays more attention to the description of the Dragon fin, and the clear and delicate lines make the tail fin radial [7]. Not only the dorsal fin is different, but also the psychological characteristics of the dragon pattern of the blue and white dragon pattern plate of Qianlong and the blue and white Shuanglong playing with the Pearl plate of Guangxu are different.

4.1.1 Pattern diversity

In the Qianlong period, the dragon pattern decoration on porcelain was more elaborate than that of the Kangxi period. It also borrowed the "bow" shape of the Kangxi period and the cirrus pattern of the Yongzheng period. The decorative patterns also became complex and diverse. The dragon pattern of the blue and white dragon pattern plate of Qianlong is more delicate than that of the blue and white Shuanglong playing with beads plate of Guangxu. It pays more attention to depicting the body of the dragon, for example, the Dragon horn is prominent, the eyes are divine, and the details of the Dragon scales, fins, claws and other parts are more in-depth. Compared with the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns, the body details of the Chinese Qing Dynasty Guangxu Blue and White Shuanglong Playing Pearl Appreciation Plate, the Dragon claws and each part of the dragon are simple and rough in the design and description, lacking the dragon's appearance. On the whole, the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns lacks the sense of strength, and the line technology is much inferior to the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns.

4.1.2 Facial features

The teeth of the mouth of Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns and Guangxu blue and white Shuanglong playing ball plate are sharp on both sides, but the teeth in the middle are neat and flat, and the teeth in the lower jaw are generally obvious. In terms of line composition, the mouth of Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns is characterized by distinct edges and corners, which is very strong, makes the mouth of the dragon very hard and powerful.

The forehead of Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns and Guangxu blue and white Shuanglongs playing with pearls shows a raised "bag". The dragon head is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, and the Dragon horn is prominent, which is very dynamic [6]. Compared with the previous dynasties, his forehead became larger, fuller and very protruding. Such a forehead can not only show the majesty and the boldness of the dragon, forming a strong and powerful symbol, but also reflect the status and respect of the emperor at that time, become a symbol of being valued and respected. Qianlong's blue and white dragon pattern is on his face, with prominent dragon horns, more straight and powerful, dignified eyes and thick hair. The eyes are vivid, and the front part of the dragon's whiskers is curly, very slender and extending forward. The forehead is round, and the lines are soft and hard, which can not only reflect the beauty of the dragon head, but also give full play to the strong and powerful sense of strength of the dragon.

However, the face of the dragon with the dragon pattern on the blue and white Shuanglongs playing with beads in Guangxu is more rounded. It is no longer the image of the supreme emperor. The eyes
are no longer staring straight ahead. The beard of the dragon is curled down, the mane is disordered, and the horn of the dragon is more curved and wrinkled, showing weakness.

4.1.3 Body characteristics

The blue and white dragon tattoo of the Qianlong period is majestic and powerful in posture. It has an unrestrained feeling. The line structure is bold and regular, which can reflect the strong confidence brought by the strong national strength at that time. However, the body of the dragon tattoo of the blue and white Shuanglongs playing with beads in Guangxu is much thinner. The curl of the dragon tattoo of the blue and white Shuanglongs playing with beads in Guangxu is less than that of the blue and white dragon tattoo in Qianlong. The line structure is weak and lacks strength. The whole body has completely lost its previous magnificent beauty, showing that the body of the dragon tattoo is rigid and the shape is much older. The Dragon scales on the body are not painted one by one like those on the blue and white dragon pattern plate of Qianlong. Instead, they are first drawn into a net, and then small dots are added to it, so as to save energy and technology. The Dragon fins are sparser than the blue and white dragon patterns of Qianlong, and the swinging posture of the dragon body is very rigid.

4.1.4 Dragon claw characteristics

While the blue and White Shuanglongs of Guangxu play at the bead plate and the dragon body swings mechanically. The dragon's claws have no strength and are more like chicken's claws. It has become an out and out "chicken claw dragon". From the observation of dragon patterns on porcelain, it seems that the disintegration of the Qing Dynasty is getting closer and closer. In contrast to the Dragon claws on the blue and white Shuanglong playing ball plate of Guangxu, the Dragon claws on the dragon pattern of the blue and white dragon pattern plate of Qianlong have distinct bone joints and a sense of strength. The turning parts are mostly in the form of straight serrations. Attention is paid to the description of the Dragon fins, which can be described in detail [7], the Dragon claws of this plate only extend straight to the left and right, without movement.

4.2 Comparison of Color Characteristics

Qianlong blue and white painting was famous for its stability, thick and calm in the Qing Dynasty. It was painted with blue material made in the Qing Dynasty. At the same time, Qianlong was in the heyday of the Qing Dynasty. The color of blue and white kept the phenomenon of dispersion halo of Yongzheng. The place with heavy color was black in the blue, which was always inferior to the blue and white of the previous dynasty. There are many colors of blue and white in Guangxu, mainly including blue, black and brown, etc. blue and white also have color gradation changes, and the glaze color is warm and transparent. Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns has pure blue and white hair color, no blue and white halo, bright color, and even glaze. However, the blue and white materials of the Guangxu blue and white Shuanglong pearl playing plate are not pure, the color is dark, the Ultramarine Blue is dazzling, the color scale changes little, and the sense of hierarchy and three-dimensional are lacking. The blue and white materials float but not sink, and float on the glaze [5].

4.3 Comparison of Spatial Layout

In his paintings, Xie He, a painter of the Southern Dynasty, said: "I. vivid charm; II. Bone technique with pen; III. pictograph of objects; IV. color with categories; V. business position; VI. transfer and modeling." It can be seen that the spatial layout is very important for the decoration of the whole picture [8].

The composition of the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns and the Guangxu blue and white Shuanglong playing ball plate are very full. The difference is that the Chinese Qing Dynasty Qianlong Blue and White porcelain plate with dragon patterns fills the background with the flame pattern to depict the action of "playing ball", and depicts the dragon pattern in the center and the dragon ball on the edge of the screen, emphasizing the majesty
of the dragon pattern. The Chinese Qing Dynasty Guangxu Blue and White Shuanglong Playing Pearl Appreciation Plate is different. The two dragons playing with beads are depicted on the plate. The cloud pattern fills the background. The Dragon beads are placed in the center of the screen with the Dragon beads as the visual center. The two dragon patterns are arranged diagonally from top to bottom, with the Dragon subduing on the top and the Dragon Rising on the bottom. It focuses on the dynamic and lively momentum of the dragon pattern.

5. Reasons for the Difference of Cultural Relic Patterns

5.1 Changes In Manufacturing Process Level

According to the analysis of Xu Zhiheng, a scholar of the Republic of China, the ceramic technology in the Guangxu period “from the late period to today, the imitation has been improved. The good workers of the official kilns have been scattered and the ban has been relaxed. The tribute that was not dare to be imitated in the past is now nothing [9]”. It can be seen that during the Guangxu period, due to the loose management policy, the Royal porcelain making technology was spread abroad, and the porcelain making skills of porcelain production workers were generally improved. The blue and white color of Guangxu blue and white porcelain is early black brown or light blue, and there is a gaudy purple color. Because the colors have the drawbacks of floating times, the patterns are not clear enough, the lines are vague, and the strokes are dull and mediocre. However, the blue and white imitations of Kangxi had higher attainments. The traditional green flower wares have flourished for five centuries since the Ming and Qing Dynasties. By the time of Guangxu, they had been declining, and most of them were dark and floating; However, there is also a relatively bright type. The raw materials used are the indigo, which is popular in Tongzhi and Guangxu. Some of the blue and white wares imitated by Kangxi and Qianlong are quite eye-catching, but most of the fetuses have loose glaze, unclear dimples, and the feet are exposed to the fetuses. The fetuses are thick and wide, not firm and thin.

The porcelain carcasses of the Qianlong period were thin or thick, homogeneously fine, moderately thick and thin, and neatly trimmed. The glaze is even, moist and firm. The color material has strong glass quality, like paint and glue, and is bright and colorful. The color of the color material is the same as that of the copper body and the material body enamel [3].

5.2 Changes in the Background of the Times and Creative Ideas

In the late Qianlong period, the society was in turmoil, and the Qing Dynasty began to go downhill. The dragon pattern displayed by artisans had lost its original sense of dignity. The Dragon claws were as thin as chicken claws, and the eyes were dull, giving people a sense of decadence. The dragon pattern, which symbolizes the status of the imperial power, began to become secular and lost its solemn and sacred posture, which also indicated that the imperial power began to decline. After the Xinyou coup, the Qing government and foreign invaders jointly suppressed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Nien army. The social situation was relatively stable and the feudal ruling regime. It was temporarily consolidated and entered the historical period of the so-called “Tongguang Zhongxing”.

The ruling group headed by Cixi, on the one hand, continuously betrayed national sovereignty; On the other hand, he wantonly plundered the people's fat and ointment to satisfy his extravagant and extravagant life. Under such circumstances, since the first year of Guangxu, Jingdezhen imperial kiln factory has successively fired a considerable number of fine porcelain and sacrificial vessels for the Qing court and the eastern and Western tombs, which has slightly revived the long-term sluggish porcelain industry [3]. In the Guangxu period in the late Qing Dynasty, the society was in turmoil. Faced with such a political situation of internal and external troubles, the rulers had no intention to regulate the handicraft industry, but increased taxes to fill the empty national treasury. At this time, the artisans were also forced to make a living and had no spare time to settle down and spend a lot of
time making handicrafts. Therefore, the dragon pattern of porcelain in the Guangxu period gradually became crude and simple.

5.3 Aesthetic Changes

The artistic characteristics of the arts and crafts in the reign of Emperor Qianlong and Emperor Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty are red tape and exquisite. The painting decoration is dominant. This kind of decorative technique has great shortcomings both in the combination with the use of handicrafts and in the coordination with utensils. This undesirable tendency still exists today, and in this sense, it is undesirable [10]. In the Qianlong Dynasty, the creative ideas of ceramics emerged in an endless stream. In order to consolidate the position of the emperor and show his imperial authority, the emperor used a large number of dragon patterns in ceramic decoration. Therefore, a large number of porcelains decorated with dragon patterns emerged in the imperial kiln at that time. The dragon patterns were usually decorated on the main part of the porcelain with sea water patterns, flame patterns and cloud patterns. The momentum of the emperor and his ruling authority were quite prominent [6]. During the Qianlong period, due to the economic prosperity, the decorative style of red tape and stacking became a major feature of the Qianlong porcelain art. It seems that only the tedious and gorgeous can get the praise of the Qianlong emperor. During the Qianlong period, people's aesthetic appreciation was gorgeous. In the Guangxu period, more literati painters began to participate in the creation of folk kiln porcelain paintings, and folk kilns also made innovations in the techniques of porcelain painting. The light crimson colored porcelain created by Wang tingzuo and Cheng men was famous for a time. This soft and elegant light color was popular for a time, and almost replaced the status of ancient pastel at that time. This fashion also had some influence on the blue and white porcelain at that time, and some blue and white porcelain paintings with exquisite painting methods appeared [10]. People began to like elegant aesthetic style, but at the same time, because the Guangxu period was a period when the Qing Dynasty was gradually declining, the political situation was unstable, and the people's livelihood was unstable, most people went to work for survival, and had no time to consider politics and art [11].

6. Conclusion

By analyzing two different kinds of porcelain, it can be concluded that, first, the rise and fall of the national economic strength during the reign of Emperor Guangxu and Emperor Qianlong can be reflected from the changes of the characteristics of the dragon in the pattern of dragon patterns. At the same time, due to the aesthetic background of the times and the different factors of the porcelain production process, the comprehensive presentation effect of porcelain is also very different.

Nowadays, the feudal society is far away from people, and the dragon pattern is no longer a pattern that a few people can use. It is also because of its special cultural connotation that it is widely used in the field of design. Some products such as clothing, ceramics and daily necessities are decorated with dragon patterns. Dragon patterns have a profound impact on the field of modern decorative art. After thousands of years, the Chinese venerate in traditional patterns still shows a vitality. Through a deeper understanding and development of the artistic conception and the inner spirit of the traditional Chinese dragon pattern, this paper analyzed the two porcelain from the Qianlong and Guangxu periods from a more detailed perspective, and hopes future researcher can explore the ways and means that affect modern design.

Traditional patterns have become an irreplaceable part of the Chinese nation. Under the background of the new era, the dragon pattern has been influenced by modern design and merged with modern design to produce some new dragon patterns that conform to modern people's aesthetics. Therefore, researcher need to grasp the spirit and meaning of the dragon culture through the comparison of the dragon pattern porcelain patterns of the Qianlong and Guangxu periods of the Qing Dynasty, and apply it to modern design. Learn the majestic and vigorous line characteristics of the dragon pattern in the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, and draw a tension rich dragon pattern.
Only by abandoning the soft and weak shape of the dragon pattern in the Guangxu period can researcher design excellent modern design works full of traditional culture. In the future, the research on the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty can continue to expand the research on the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty textiles. The cases of the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty textiles in China are also very rich.

References