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中國紋飾

CHINESE DECORATIVE DESIGN 1



輔仁大學織品服裝學系編繪

中國紋飾 1

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台北 南天書局 發行

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輔仁大學織品服裝學系編繪

台北南天書局發行

輔仁大學織品服裝學系「中國紋飾」編輯小組

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CHINESE DECORATIVE DESIGN 1

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編者序

中國文化具有悠久的歷史淵源，在裝飾藝術和設計方面早已蘊育出豐富的寶藏。非常不幸的，長久以來很少有人將這廣大的文化遺產，加以系統化的搜集、分類、整理和組織，使渴望從中國文化中取得靈感之現代設計師們能有效而迅速地應用。於是，我們責無旁貸地成立“中國裝飾藝術圖案”的專案研究。主要目的是為了彌補上述缺憾，並研擬出一套適用於中國裝飾藝術特質的基本分類系統，包含17個項目。因此，我們投下許多心力廣泛地去搜集，散佈在中國和世界各地博物館、圖書館、相關資料中心和展覽目錄中最好的中國傳統設計資料。同時，為了捕捉原設計作品之美與精神，我們重新描繪，使得每一個設計作品生動鮮明地躍然紙上。

第二個目的，是建立一套研究中國裝飾藝術的圖案基礎資料，藉以進一步啟發相關性的探討。因此，我們傾全力在可能的範圍內，用心註解每一個圖案設計，提供主體內容，敘飾來源和時間地點等資料。經過三年的研究，將努力的成果採縮影片記錄方式保存了近四千多個設計單元。

為了讓更多的國內外人士分享我們的研究成果，激發大眾對中國裝飾藝術的興趣，故擷取部分精華，整理出書。我們堅信，除非中國現代的設計師們，能夠深入體會中國傳統設計的精神與美感，才有能力開創一條兼具現代感及蘊涵中國精神的設計之路。我們也深信，由於東西文化交流日趨頻繁，此刻乃最佳時機，使中國裝飾藝術取得國際應有的肯定及地位。並以其獨有的特質，在現代的設計領域中，充分發揮其影響力。藉著本書的出版，希望一方面能促進並強化東西文化的相互激盪，獲得更豐盛、更具前瞻性令人欣喜的結果，另一方面，能鼓勵自資質地協助本國的設計師，從傳統的中國文化中再一次深入地發掘豐富的藝術資源，以激發、豐沛設計師的創造力與想像力。從而挑起作爲一個中國設計師在現今世界中的特殊使命，並全力以赴，有所貢獻。

本書計兩冊，收錄的資料源於陶器、瓷器、青銅器、漆器、玉器、織品、禮畫、雕刻和建築等，共計一千一百多個設計單元。在挑選和編排上，力求各個主題在數量上的均衡度及歷史上的代表性。部分的彩色頁則提供各個時代的色彩概念，並附代表性紋飾沿革圖表。爲避免重複，故不收錄坊間已出版之窗格圖案、青銅器、玉器紋飾，部分篆刻、敦煌圖案及清末民初的吉祥圖案。

本研究專案始於民國七十一年，至今得以續集出書，必須感謝輔仁大學理工學院前任郝思謙和現任柏毅宏二位院長，多年來的財政支持；現任國立故宮博物院研究員、任教本系中西藝術史臺灣教授，啟發研究動機，提供構想並持續不斷地給予支持與鼓勵。三年以來，對研究同仁李春芳、何光華、劉桐雲的努力，我更是要表達內心的感激與謝意。最後感謝南天書局的魏德文先生在出版過程中，提供寶貴的意見。本書力求完善周謹，而疏漏之處，尤恐不免，敬請讀者方家惠予指正。

羅麥瑞

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

In her long cultural history China has produced a rich treasury of ornamental designs. Unfortunately, too little has been done so far to collect, classify and organize this vast cultural heritage in such a way as to make it more readily available to the modern idea-hunting designer.

To contribute toward such an objective, we invested much energy and time to gather a great variety of the best of Chinese traditional designs scattered in numerous local and overseas museums, libraries, design resource centers, and exhibition catalogues. Next we attempted to develop a basic classification system, consisting of seventeen categories, taking into account the scope and uniqueness of Chinese decorative art. Much time has been spent to retrace and redraw all of the collected designs to recapture their original beauty and to present them in such a manner as to allow each of these designs to speak for itself as a powerful source of inspiration.

Another objective was to initiate the establishment of a pictorial data base to facilitate and stimulate continued research in the area of Chinese decorative art. Therefore, we took care to identify each of the designs in terms of subject matter, source object, geographic location, and historical period, on the basis of the information presently available.

Three years of intensive work resulted in the development of an archive, presently comprising more than four thousand individual designs, systematically stored in form of microfiche.

Desiring to share the results of our pioneer effort in the field of Chinese decorative art with a wider audience on the local Chinese as well as on the international level we decided to publish part of our work in form of this pictorial design reference book.

Referring to the local scene, we believe that only to the extent that native designers are thoroughly familiar with their own design tradition will they be able to capture its authentic spirit and in turn be captured by it. This will empower them to refrain from mere imitation of past artistic expression and create something new out of their own experience, something appealing to contemporary society and yet distinctively Chinese in spirit and feeling.

Referring to the international scene, we are living today in a world of increasing cultural exchange between East and West. This exchange extends to all levels of human experience and expression thereof. As far as Chinese ornamental art is concerned we believe that it is high time to draw increased universal attention to it and to claim the international influence it undoubtedly deserves in the field of modern design. For its intrinsic beauty and unique inspiration can indeed make a valuable contribution to the world's treasury of design resources.

We hope to facilitate and intensify with the publication of these two volumes of traditional design the ongoing process of mutual discovery, enrichment and enjoyment between East and West. We also hope to assist and encourage native designers to re-discover the rich artistic resources in their own cultural tradition wherewith

to feed and enkindle their creative imagination. Thus they will be enabled to assume their special mission as Chinese designers in a modern world, and make a contribution all their own.

The designs presented in these volumes are derived mainly from art objects such as pottery, porcelain, bronze, jade, lacquer, gold and silver, textiles, paintings, sculptures, architecture, etc... Altogether there are about one thousand one hundred plus design units. They were selected and arranged in such a way as to allow for a more or less equal amount of subject matter representative of each major historical period. Some colour pages are offered to give an idea of the colour preferences typical of a given era. In order to avoid duplication of designs published elsewhere under a special title, we omitted the inclusion of some of the more popular designs in the area of windowpane-, bronze- and jade patterns, Han Dynasty wall rubbings, Tun-huang paintings and good luck motifs of the late Ching early Chinese Republic period. The appendix offers a comparative chart illustrating the evolutionary changes of selected motifs throughout Chinese cultural history.

We own special gratitude to the Deans of the College of Natural Sciences and Engineering of Fu Jen University, Dr. H. Hesselfeld and Dr. F. Budenholzer, for granting us financial support from the Divine Word Research Fund. Such support was critical in promoting the research preceding the publication of this book. Furthermore, I wish to thank Professor Tseng Yu, research fellow at the National Palace Museum, for the stimulating dialogues during the initial stages of conceptualizing the project and for his continued interest and encouragement. Most of all, I need to thank each of the team members Miss Lee Chuen-Fang, Ho Jau-Hwa and Liu Chuen-Yun for the fine work and enthusiastic spirit throughout these three years of this cooperative endeavor. My gratitude also extends to Mr. Wei Te-Wen for his continuous interest and advice in the process of publication.

Maryta Laumann, S. Sp. S.

序

中國圖案紋飾，源淵流長，複雜豐富，資料浩如瀚海，堪稱中國藝術傳統光輝的一環。可惜這些傳統裝飾資料如何去整理發掘？有何象徵含意？如何演變至今？此類繁重的研究工作目前在中國可說尚未起步。

西洋對裝飾紋飾的研究，十九世紀中葉在奧國開始，至今已有一百三十多年的研究傳統。在中國要開始此類整理工作，方法上借助西歐之處必多。

在中國，過去亦曾有“中國圖案集”之類的書出版。惟編輯的態度及處理方法，不太嚴謹，不能提供，作為學術性的資料應用，主要的缺點，是不知出處，無法肯定時空上的定點關係。

輔大織品系編繪的“中國紋飾”大體上已能改善過去的缺乏，其特點可分述於下：

- (1)重新繪製中國古代紋飾，使線條及造型，清晰可見，同時顯示紋飾及整體器型間的關係，比任何照片及複製形象，更具清楚的真實感，並且商天畫局，印刷精美，效果上遠超過過去的前輩。全書有統一性的整體感。
- (2)嚐試將紋飾風格的演變以表格方式排列，可見大略性的型式變化。雖然這種藝術史處理方式，精密度尚嫌粗枝大葉，但在中國可說是開創傳統紋飾科學整理之風，使中國圖案研究邁前了一步。
- (3)利用縮影片，儲存圖案形象，並將每件圖像紋飾的出處，來源，時代，詳細登記，倘若將來能配合電腦運用，使查訊手續簡單，在運作複印上，能變得更方便迅速。這些紋飾顯然是中國傳統圖案體性的原始資料，其對社會的功能，可分兩方面來說：
 - (1)中國美工設計家可從這些圖案資料中取得靈感，推陳出新，使現代的圖案能更踏實於中國裝飾傳統，開創現代中國設計的新領域。
 - (2)藝術史家可利用這些紋飾，應用這些清晰繪製的資料，作種種斷代，主題分析，大大方便了他們的工作。不啻是報章或是學術性的文章中，這種紋飾的流傳，能使大眾能進一步，接觸到中國的藝術傳統，熟悉我們設計上文化的老根，能引發普遍性的大眾注意及興趣。這是一項極具意義的文化服務。

會 靖

PREFACE

It was John Ruskin (London 1819-Brentwood 1900) and Eugene Viollet le Duc (Paris 1814-Lausanne 1879) who were the first European scholars interested in Gothic architectural patterns. These patterns gave them a sense of national pride and ethnological artistic identity. This happened in Europe around 1850 half a century after the industrial revolution; and the Chinese in Taiwan thirty years after the same experience look with candour and sympathy to Ruskin's and Viollet le Duc's interest, although the pattern that interested them may be of a different origin.

Alois Riegl (Linz 1858-Vienna 1905) was the first Western art historian who adopted an objective method to analyse design pattern. He was keeper of the textile department, Oesterreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Vienna. He devoted his first book 'Altorientalische Teppiche' (1891) to the study of the oriental rug in the Austrian collection. In the same year, an American scholar W.H. Goodyear published a study on Egyptian lotus pattern. The study of design pattern and its significance is a relatively new branch of art history discipline, only covering a short history of 90 years.

We Chinese are late-comers to this field of pattern analysis and iconology, and naturally we are very much indebted to all the British, French, Austrian, American and Japanese predecessors whose working experience and methods have become indispensable for us to approach pattern classification and analysis.

This is the first publication of the Fu Jen University Textile Department's Chinese design archive. We hope many designers and art historians will find it useful for reference and study. We welcome more people to join us in this branch of creative work and research. Eventually this archive will foster a new awareness of the beauty of our traditional design among Chinese manufacturers and draw the public's special attention to the Chinese heritage in decorative art.

Tseng Yu

前言

西化？傳統？還是不中不西的混成曲？

抄襲？複製？還是有所創新？

二十世紀的中國裝飾藝術與設計如同其他中國文化面臨著有史以來最大的考驗。先是上個世紀後期西方強勢文化的衝擊，中國文化在丟棄捨回聲中，仍未完全被肯定認同。西方紋飾、設計在不甚明其究理下被仿造濫用，中國傳統裝飾藝術則在漠視忽略下被打入冷宮。

另一個衝擊來自工業革命，此始於十八世紀末英國的工業革命，帶來大量生產與大量消費的經濟模式。在歐美，設計面臨獨特性與產量，美觀與功能，傳統與現代的衝突權衡之下，自上個世紀中即不斷發生設計改革運動，以應變傳統工藝與現代科技發展的差距，反應出藝術理論、哲學思想、社會結構的變遷。工業革命發生於中國較西方晚近一個半世紀，同樣的問題，在中國容許思考成長的時間却很短暫，發育不良是必然的結果。

在遭遇上述兩種衝擊，中國裝飾藝術與設計的發展產生了下列現象：

一、抄襲西方：由於民族自尊心的失落，自信心的喪失，在汲汲吸收西方文明下，往往失去自發的創造力。遲來的工業革命，帶來了錯綜複雜的政經、社會、文化問題，為了國際市場的生存競爭，我們無暇、無心、也無力去探討、反應、解決這些影響設計的問題，只有跟著西方潮流起伏。

二、複製傳統：被忽略的傳統設計，因無人繼續探索研究，與現實生活格格不入。移植而來的工業生產技術更加速了傳統工藝技巧的喪失，面對這麼大的“文化包袱”只能依樣畫葫蘆，大量生產古物複製品，以滿足西方人對中國文化的好奇心和減少中國人對忘却祖傳文化的愧疚感。

三、不中不西的混成曲：在逐漸興起建立中國獨特設計的認知下，“中國風”成為中國設計最普遍的主題，許多生硬拼合，表面形式化的設計，不僅中國人自己無法認同，對中國設計也無法給予適當的解決之道。

更不幸的是我們直接承繼的清末裝飾藝術傳統——亦即大多數外國人眼中的中國風格——除了受外來文化的“侵略”而衰退，其本身細縝繁複，與中國歷代的裝飾藝術成就相較，已走入設計之末流死巷。研究中國藝術史聞名的美國學者 Michael Sullivan 在其 *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* 一書中對中國的裝飾藝術和設計曾下如此評論：“代表宮廷藝術之精細織品、瓷瓶、玉器、首飾在明清時技巧達巔峯，傳至二十世紀僅存積敗之外形，過度的表面紋飾失去了設計的單純性與活力，裝飾愈加醒目，缺乏格調……”

此與近代西方裝飾藝術與設計的發展由繁複走向簡化相反與複雜的現代社會，處處要求簡單化的設計相法相左，繁複不合潮流成就愈加強烈。

究竟現代中國設計應走的途徑為何？創新、簡化是也。

一、創新：在今日設計領域裡，首要著重在“新觀念與創造力”，新設計、新產品每日不斷誕生。中國裝飾藝術與設計在長久停滯發展下，唯有不斷創新的動力，才能使之復活，並洗鍊出優良設計，進而取得國際認可的地位。

二、簡化：中國裝飾藝術走向簡化是必然也是必要的趨勢，只有去除過度的紋飾才能表達設計理念的真正重心，顯現設計的精神、活力，除了切合現代生活的精神外，也是使中國與西方之裝飾藝術交會融合的最佳途徑。

然創新並非無中生有，簡化更非盲目刪減，因設計需能解決當前並預知將來的問題，

並與過去息息相關，每一種設計如建築、產品、汽車、傢俱、織品、服裝等等更因其所涉及之技術、藝術、社會、傳統等問題的層面不盡相同，要談得具體絕非三言兩語，或任一人之能力所能及。然而中國兵家有句話“知己知彼，百戰百勝”却是共通的策略，知彼包括了解西方設計發展過程所經問題與解決之道，以之為借鑒，並緊迫，探求最新的设计問題，以掌握其潮流動態。知己包括深入探討中國傳統藝術文化，思索當今中國設計面臨的各種問題，這樣或自固有傳統擷取靈感，或以中國人特有的眼光審視現代設計問題，或替中國當今設計癥結把脈處方，都能有左右逢源的深厚功力。

汲取西方文化新知，我們似乎是做了不少，仍然嫌不足，而了解中國固有文化，就更不禁讓我們汗顏，因我們真的做得太少。編讀這套一本書，是我們尋根工作的一部份，只能算對保存、探索，了解傳統盡一點心力。我們的目的自然不在讓讀者方便抄襲，而是希望這樣豐富的文化寶藏能成為靈感啟發的泉源。

傳統為我們到底有何意義？我們又應以什麼樣的眼光去“讀”它？此大致可從兩方面來看。

一、傳統裝飾藝術與設計給我們在線條、比例、分割、構圖、配置、色彩、質感、選題取材、意象象徵等等美學和設計哲學無窮的靈感，它是先民在視覺美感、功能、技術、自然環境、社會等問題之解決之道與經驗累積。就如西方設計師們不斷自東方的中國、日本尋求其創作靈感、理論依據——如新藝術運動 Art Nouveau 的設計風格、理念——同樣的，我們從此承傳的文化，也應能發揮其另一層次的發鈔作用。

除了理性思想觀念的影響，傳統藝術和設計也予人視覺感官上的潛移默化，這時設計師不需解釋原由，承繼的傳統和其個人生活視覺經驗，人格特質，自會形成其美學上特有的處理方式。

二、中國裝飾藝術的發展，並非封閉性的而是不斷融合其他外來文化的裝飾風格，引進新的製造技術，以持續其活力。從青銅器時期引入西伯利亞遊牧民族的動物風格；西漢絲綢的開通給東西文化陸路交流，奠定一基礎，由其遺址；文物可見許多同受東西風格影響的設計；東漢、魏晉時期佛教傳入，來自印度的紋飾象徵，影響了中國宗教裝飾藝術；唐代雖敗於大食；但中東、中亞藝術却豐富了唐的裝飾藝術，盤珠、對鳥、對獸、卷草很自然的融合成中國的裝飾風格；白地青花瓷器已被天經地義的視為中國最具代表性的裝飾藝術之一，其釉彩技術却是元代才從中東傳入的。今天我們雖面臨著中國設計史上最大的文化衝擊，只要我們取捨得當，融合的外來文化，將給中國文化更豐富的內涵。回顧這一部長遠的裝飾藝術史，由其對外來文化的衝擊所持有的彈性與融合力，會讓我們在取捨當今東西文化時，有較大的自由度與自信心。

或有人要說我們過度強調了傳統的重要性，這樣只會自加束縛，我們應反傳統。不幸的是這樣仍讓我們拋不掉傳統因為要相對已存在的經驗、理念提出相反的論調、挑戰，而不致流於無的放矢，了解傳統是必要的。

對現有的經驗，理念提出質詢，亦即採用不同的角度審視事物是我們自傳統獲取創新的靈感的最好方法。或重新表達舊有設計，對傳統提出新的詮釋；或從過去先人的經驗尋求自我設計哲學的比較、應證；或者發現了真的創見，因為從來未曾在歷史上出現過，都是我們創新的方式。

觀察唐代銅器、漢代石刻、唐宋陶磁，特別是宋官窯之幾無紋飾，以造形、釉色、品質取勝；宋、金民間磁州窯陶磁以黑白色為主，瀟灑有力的幾筆，已達到裝飾藝術簡化的最高境界。西方陶瓷藝術數百年來仍承認中國陶磁裝飾藝術的價值，以之為研習，靈感取材的來源，甚有歎謫不測中國幾百、千年前已有的成就者，我們又怎能不去從中體會中國裝飾藝術在簡化上的力道與精簡？

我們正處於中國裝飾藝術與設計歷史變化的關鍵性時刻，如何處理這筆承繼的文化

遺產與來自西方文化的影響，對中國設計的發展將有莫大的決定性。倘若切望今後的中国設計師們不再視此豐厚的裝飾藝術與設計傳統為歷史負擔，而是一筆取之不盡的寶山。正視、倒看，反覆思量，藝術本無常理！創作，試驗，切中要點，必能旋轉乾坤！

李春芳

FOREWORD

Westernisation, Chinese tradition, or a medley which is neither truly Chinese nor Western? To copy, to reproduce, or to innovate?

Chinese decorative art and design in the twentieth century, like other aspects of Chinese culture, is facing the biggest test of its history. This began with the cultural impact of the Western powers in the latter nineteenth century, when there was little consensus about whether to discard or retrieve Chinese culture. Without a full understanding of its principles, Western decoration and design were imitated to excess, while traditional Chinese decorative art was consigned to the limbo of neglect.

Another form of impact has sprung from the industrial revolution. This originated with the late eighteenth-century British industrial revolution, which set the economic pattern of large-scale production and large-scale consumption. In Europe and America, with design confronting the contradictory claims of uniqueness versus industrial output, beauty versus function, and tradition versus modernity, there have arisen since the last century a series of design reform movements aimed at addressing the disparity between traditional handicrafts and modern technological development and reacting to changes in art theory, philosophical thought, and social structure. The industrial revolution occurred in China almost a century and a half later than in the West, and only a short time has been allowed in China to think about precisely the same problems. A certain immaturity in our thinking has therefore been the inevitable result.

Affected by this twofold impact, Chinese decorative art and design has developed in the following directions:

1. Copying the West: due to the ebbing of national self-respect and self-confidence, spontaneous creativity was often lost in the desire to absorb as much of Western civilisation as possible. The delayed arrival of the industrial revolution brought complex politico-economic, social and cultural problems, but due to the need to compete for survival in international markets we had no time, spirit or energy to explore, address and solve the issues affecting design. The only viable option was to follow Western trends.
2. Reproducing from tradition: neglected traditional design grew ever more incompatible with real life since hardly anyone continued to study it. The transplanting to China of industrial production techniques further accelerated the decline in traditional handicraft skills. All that was left was to produce large numbers of reproductions of traditional antiques in order to satisfy Western curiosity about Chinese culture and to assuage the feeling of guilt among Chinese for abandoning their ancestral culture.
3. A medley neither Chinese nor Western: as a consciousness of uniquely Chinese design gradually arose and became established. "Chinese style" became the most common theme in Chinese design. This resulted in many designs suffering from harsh juxtapositions and superficial formalism which were not only unacceptable

to Chinese people but provided no suitable solutions for Chinese design.

A further disadvantage was the fact that the late-Ch'ing artistic tradition we directly inherited (i.e. what most non-Chinese regard as constituting "Chinese style") was not only weakened by foreign cultural invasion but in itself showed great fussiness and complexity compared to the achievements of Chinese decorative art in other periods. This indicated that it had already entered an impasse from the viewpoint of design. The eminent American historian-of Chinese art Michael Sullivan formulated the following assessment of Chinese decorative art and design in his book *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century*: "The fine textiles, porcelain, jade and jewellery representative of palace art reached their peak of technical skill in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. But by the twentieth century only a bare shell survived in which excessive surface decoration had lost purity and vitality of design. The more noticeable the decoration, the more it lacked style...."

In contrast with the development of Western decorative art and design from complexity towards simplicity, such complexity is at variance with the demands of complex modern society for simplified design at every point. But this kind of complexity in defiance of modern trends is becoming more and more marked.

What then is the direction in which contemporary Chinese design should be moving? It is surely that of innovation and simplification.

1. Innovation: in the realm of contemporary design the main point to be emphasised is "new concepts and creativity". New designs and new products are coming into being every day. After such a long period of stagnation in the development of Chinese decorative art and design, only incessant innovation can provide the motive force to bring about its revival. Then superior designs can emerge which will win international recognition and standing.
2. Simplification: it is both an inevitable and an essential trend for Chinese decorative art to develop towards greater simplicity. Only if excessive decoration is stripped away can the true heart of a design idea be expressed, and the spirit and vitality of a design be made manifest. In addition to corresponding with the spirit of contemporary life, this is the best way for mixing and merging Chinese and Western decorative art.

However, innovation does not mean creating something out of nothing, neither does simplification involve blindly stripping things away. For design must be able to offer solutions to current problems and show awareness of the problems that lie ahead, while remaining in touch with the past. Every area of design, whether architecture, industrial products, cars, furniture, textiles and clothing involves similar problems on the level of technology, art, society and tradition. These cannot be concretely addressed in just a few sentences, and it would be beyond any individual's power to attempt to do so. But perhaps we can take our strategy from the Chinese authority on warfare who wrote "the key to victory is to know both yourself and the other side." In this context, "knowing the other side" would include understanding the problems experienced by Western design in the course of its development and the solutions adopted for dealing with them. This would provide valuable lessons while at the same time we catch up and explore the latest design problems in order

to master current trends. "Knowing oneself" in this context includes thoroughly researching traditional Chinese art and culture, and pondering the various problems faced by contemporary Chinese design. In this way one may either derive inspiration from indigenous tradition, or examine modern design issues from a uniquely Chinese viewpoint, or provide remedies for knotty impasses in contemporary Chinese design. Any of these courses cannot fail to have some beneficial function.

When it comes to absorbing fresh knowledge about Western culture we never seem satisfied with even quite big efforts, while we should truly be more ashamed for our inadequate understanding of indigenous Chinese culture. Compiling a book of this kind is a way of tracing our own roots, and may be considered a small contribution towards preserving, exploring and understanding our cultural heritage. Our purpose has not been to make it easier for the reader to copy traditional Chinese designs, but rather we hope that this rich cultural treasure-house may become a source of artistic inspiration.

In the last analysis, what significance does tradition have for us? How should we go about studying it? These questions can be looked at from two different angles.

1. Traditional decorative art and design provides us with an infinity of aesthetic inspirations and pointers in philosophy of design, whether in the field of lineation, proportion, demarcation, layout, disposition, coloration, texture, choice of subject matter or symbolic meaning. It represents the accumulated experience and solutions of our forbears to problems bearing on visual beauty, function, technique, natural environment and society. Just as Western designers have constantly turned to China and Japan for their creative inspiration and for theoretical backing, as seen for instance in the design style and concepts of the Art Nouveau movement, so should we be able to unearth new levels of inspiration from our cultural heritage.

In addition to its conceptual influence on the level of intellectual ideas, traditional decorative art and design has a subtle transforming effect visually. Thus the designer need not explain his reasons, for his inherited tradition together with his individual visual experience and qualities of his character will naturally combine to form a unique aesthetic approach.

2. The development of Chinese decorative art has not taken place in a vacuum. It has constantly mingled with other decorative styles from foreign cultures and adopted fresh manufacturing techniques in order to maintain its vitality. In the bronze age it absorbed the zoomorphic style of Siberian nomadic peoples; in the Western Han the opening of the silk road laid the basis for interchange between Eastern and Western cultures overland, and artifacts from sites along the silk road show many designs influenced equally by Eastern and Western styles; with the introduction of Buddhism to China in the Eastern Han, Wei and Chin dynasties, decorative symbolism of Indian origin influenced Chinese religious art; in the T'ang dynasty, despite its setbacks at the hands of the Moslem empire, Middle Eastern and Central Asian art enriched T'ang decorative art, and twisting strings of beads, paired birds, paired animals and coiled plant-stems became naturally intermingled into Chinese decorative styles; blue and white porcelain is regarded almost

without question as one of China's most typical decorative art forms, although this glaze technique was only introduced into China from the Middle East as late as the Yuan dynasty.

Today Chinese design is facing the biggest cultural impact in its history, but as long as we choose appropriately, the admixture of outside culture will give Chinese culture a richer content. Looking back over this long history of our decorative art, an appreciation of the flexibility and adaptability it has acquired from contact with foreign cultures will give us greater freedom and confidence when it comes to selecting the best from contemporary Eastern and Western cultures.

Some may say we have overemphasised the importance of tradition, that by doing so we only place constrictions on ourselves, and that we should oppose tradition. Unfortunately this attitude will never allow us to discard tradition entirely because some understanding of tradition is essential if we want to pose an effective challenge to existing experience and received ideas.

To question current experience and notions, in other words to examine things from a different angle, is the best way to obtain creative inspiration from tradition. To lend new expression to an old design, offering a fresh interpretation of tradition; to seek in collective past experience for comparisons and corroboration of one's own design philosophy; or to discover truly original innovations which have never occurred in history before — all these are viable ways of making a creative contribution.

Observe Shang bronzes, Han stone carvings and T'ang and Sung pottery, especially Kuan ware of the Sung period which is almost devoid of ornament and relies on its form, the colour of its glaze and its sheer quality for all its effect; again, Sung and Chin Tz'u-chou ware with its predominantly black and white coloration relies on a few bold brushstrokes to achieve the highest expression of simplicity in decorative art. For several centuries Western ceramic art has acknowledged the value of the decorative techniques of Chinese porcelain, and the West has studied it and drawn upon it for inspiration, even sometimes being lost in admiration at the achievements made by Chinese ceramicists many centuries ago. Why is it that we ourselves cannot appreciate this strong simplistic spirit inherent in Chinese decorative art?

We are living in a period in which Chinese decorative art and design is undergoing key transformations, and how we deal with our cultural heritage and the cultural influences of Western cultures is going to prove decisive for the future development of Chinese design. This editor earnestly hopes that Chinese designers will no longer regard this rich tradition of decorative art and design as an historical burden but rather as an inexhaustible treasurestore to draw upon.

Lee Chuen-Fang