
A Study on the Characteristics and the Meaning of the 'baoxianghua' Patterns in the Dun Huang Murals, China

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ABSTRACT: *The study explores the distinctive 'baoxianghua' designs intrinsic to the art of China's Tang Dynasty. Unlike typical Chinese patterns that usually replicate specific natural forms or shapes, the 'baoxianghua' patterns depict an idealized plant emblem that carried significant symbolic weight in the Tang period. The main goal of this project is to investigate the unique characteristics and significances of the 'baoxianghua' motifs during the four stages of the Tang Dynasty, with a specific focus on the Dun Huang frescoes. The research aims to unravel and examine the relationships between the features and symbolic components of the 'baoxianghua' patterns in these works of art, laying the groundwork for further scholarly discussion. The methodology selected for this study is a qualitative approach with a strong emphasis on visual investigation. This study employs analysis to investigate the 'baoxianghua' motifs across various phases of the Tang Dynasty as depicted in the Dun Huang frescoes. Furthermore, it involves iconographic analysis of images and text, conducted to unravel metaphors and symbols ingrained in these motifs. Principally, this research underscores the uniqueness of the 'baoxianghua' motif in classical Chinese art, emphasizing its absence of literal natural correspondences and its deep-rooted cultural and symbolic significance within the context of the Tang Dynasty. The research strives to provide extensive theoretical insight into these motifs, particularly in the context of the Dun Huang frescoes, using a qualitative method and a technique of visual analysis.*

KEYWORDS: Baoxianghua Patterns, Tang Dynasty, Dun Huang Murals, Visual Analysis, Chinese Art Symbolism

INTRODUCTION

The Tang Dynasty and Dunhuang Caves: A Legacy of Art and Culture

The Tang Dynasty (618-907) is distinguished in China's history as an era of remarkable national prosperity, flourishing economy, and significant cultural growth. Also referred to as the Mogao Caves, the Dunhuang Caves comprise an intricate network of 492 temples positioned in Dunhuang, China. Renowned for their elaborate Buddhist art, the caves encapsulate a millennium worth of artistic variation and evolution spanning from the 4th to the 14th centuries. They host an impressive array of artistic treasures – including some of the most beautifully preserved illustrations of Buddhist art, a precious collection of vibrant

murals, intricately carved sculptures, and invaluable manuscripts. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Dunhuang Caves are globally acknowledged for their profound historical importance, vast cultural richness, and extraordinary artistic contribution.

The "baoxianghua" or "Treasure Lotus" motifs in the Dunhuang frescoes from the Tang Dynasty hold a crucial position in the artistic philosophy of that era. Pervasive in the Dunhuang cave illustrations, these patterns display the craftsmanship of Tang Dynasty artisans and encapsulate the period's religious and cultural relevance. The Dunhuang Caves, also termed the Mogao Caves, are home to 492 sites brimming with detailed Buddhist artwork spanning from the 4th to the 14th centuries. The "baoxianghua" motifs stand out due to their intricate structure and symbolic resonance, signifying purity and spiritual ascension. This research aims to delve into the distinct features and underlying symbolism of these motifs, thereby enriching our comprehension of Tang Dynasty artistic expression, cultural norms, and religious perspectives.

The 'baoxianghua' designs are prevalent in textile embroideries and carvings of assorted gold and silver artifacts, presenting in varied forms and infused with deep cultural meanings. This study focuses on the 'baoxianghua' patterns from the Tang Dynasty, employs visual research methods, and investigates the characteristics of these designs during the Tang Dynasty's four stages as illustrated in the Mo Gao Caves of Dun Huang.

The 'baoxianghua' designs experienced considerable alterations in the Tang Dynasty, assimilating various trendy designs of the period, evolving from the lotus design pre-Tang Dynasty, and subsequently incorporating components of peony and profane motifs. This evolution underscores the flexible and innovative spirit of the Tang Dynasty, demonstrating a blend of traditional Chinese designs and the region's cultural combination of the period. In the Wei Jin Northern and Southern Dynasties, Tibetan Buddhist iconography had a significant influence on the evolving lotus design, leading to its development into a highly intricate, exquisite, and luxurious style during the Tang Dynasty. This period marked the emergence of the variant Bao Xiang Flower, epitomizing the pinnacle of elegance and opulence (Chen, 2015). It's widely recognized that the fine arts of the Yuan dynasty deeply revered the heritage of the Song dynasty. This led to the further evolution of the Song's aesthetic ideals, which were combined with elements of Nomadic and Central Asian influences. Eventually, by the end of the period, these influences culminated in the establishment of a unique style characteristic of the Yuan era (Ibid).

The research into the 'baoxianghua' designs during the Tang Dynasty uncovers the relationship between the features and significances of these patterns. The study's objective is to establish a theoretical structure that elaborates on the traits and meaning of the 'baoxianghua' designs in Dun Huang's mural paintings.

Approaches to Inquiry and Interpretation of Findings


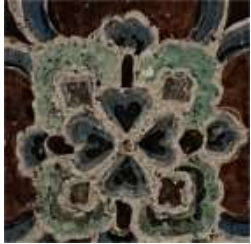

This research dives into the characteristic 'baoxianghua' motifs depicted in the Dun Huang frescoes from China's Tang Dynasty, with emphasis on their singular traits and cultural relevance. Acknowledging the 'baoxianghua' as a crucial component of Chinese ornamental art, the study investigates its progression throughout the four periods of the Tang Dynasty, mirroring the period's cultural shifts and aesthetic inclinations. These motifs, important for their symbolic depiction of "prosperity," are scrutinized for their fusion of shape and

meaning, personifying the visual and cultural language of the era.

This study adopts a qualitative approach, employing visual analysis techniques and iconographic studies. It follows Gillian Rose's three-step process for visual analysis that includes thorough examination of the visuals, consideration of their societal contexts, and comprehension of their cultural implications. This tactic aids in deconstructing the 'baoxianghua' designs' representation and significance in contemporary Chinese art. In addition, iconographic analysis as described by Eric Margolis and Luc Pauwels, involves classifying visuals, chronicling detailed accounts, and formulating theories that integrate images and text. This method unearths the societal, political, and cultural contexts of the designs during the Tang Dynasty.

The process of data gathering involved examining 25 out of the 282 Tang Dynasty caves in the Mo Gao network, recording original images and specifics of the 'baoxianghua' patterns using smartphones and jot-pads. Despite encountering difficulties in data procurement due to damage in the caves, pivotal data was successfully amassed from these sites. Every pattern was documented with three pictures, capturing both broad and detailed perspectives, to comprehensively comprehend their structure and significance during the Tang Dynasty. The exhaustive analysis, incorporating 40 meticulous illustrations and 105 high-resolution images, strives to enrich our grasp of the cultural and artistic importance of these patterns. The process of gathering data required the use of an iPhone and notepads to capture the 'baoxianghua' designs with precision and authenticity. These designs, located in diverse cave areas like central caissons and Buddhist niches, were categorized and assessed based on their era. The methodology of the research involved capturing three images of each design for comprehensive analysis, concentrating on both general and magnified views. The goal was to instinctively convey the arrangement of the 'baoxianghua' design, enhancing comprehension of its connotation and importance in the Tang Dynasty.

The development process entailed importing the 'baoxianghua' design into Procreate and regulating its saturation and luminosity to improve the clearness of the contour and specifics. The original image's transparency was lessened to assist in extracting the digital drawing. A new layer was established for retracing the design using the Apple Pencil, adhering tightly to the original's form. This technique was deployed to produce 40 digital illustrations of 'baoxianghua' designs from assorted Tang Dynasty phases, which assisted in decoding their significances. Table 1 shows the canonical patterns found from the four historical periods.

No.	Pattern	Pattern (close-up1)	Pattern (close-up2)	Cave	Time
1				Baoxianghua' patterns of the mural in the core of Caisson in Cave 211 of Mo Gao Cave in Dun Huang	Early Tang Dynasty (618-704)










2				'Baoxianghua' patterns of the mural in the core of Caisson in Cave 320 of Mo Gao Cave in Dun Huang'	Prosperous Tang Dynasty (704-780)
3				Baoxianghua' patterns of On the north wall of cave 201, There is a carpet in the middle of the dance floor in "The Sutra of Infinite Life"	Mid-Tang Dynasty (781-848)
4				The 'baoxianghua' Patterns found in Cave 232, Mo Gao Cave, Dun Huang, Checkerboard decorative pattern	Late Tang Dynasty (848-914)

Table 1: Example of sorting the 'baoxianghua' patterns

Formal and Principal Characteristics

Lines serve as a vital visual dialect in Chinese painting (Li Yunpeng, 2020). Comparable to Western traditional art's foundation, the line is the most rudimentary component in traditional Chinese art (Wang Juan, 2016). However, in various dynasties, the length, thickness, and rhythm of lines change. These distinct line languages signify the aesthetic traits and cultural backdrop of the different dynasties. It's viable to assert that the lines encapsulate the aesthetic significance of each Chinese nation's epoch. Boasting high degrees of generalization and expressiveness in artistry, lines effectively portray the diverse imagery and stances in the Dun Huang murals (Qin Jin, 2021).

Geometric Designs

To more effectively examine the traits and importance of the 'baoxianghua' designs, a study was conducted on the manifestation of 'baoxianghua' patterns in relation to geometric shapes. This study coincided with the specific fortuitous meanings associated with geometric shapes and was used to categorize and delineate these patterns.

Artistic expression through geometric lines is an abstract form, marked by succinct and

regular combinations of lines, emphasizing form accuracy and symmetry. This aesthetic method of using geometric lines is prevalent in architecture, design, painting, and other fields. It offers beauty and incites contemplation about space, structure, and form (Chang Shanna, 2019).

The ubiquity of geometric designs manifests a type of orderly elegance. Geometric designs encompass various patterns formed from fundamental geometric elements such as dots, lines, and surfaces (Guo Yuxi, 2015). The aesthetic traits of geometric lines encompass simplicity, regularity, and symmetry.

Through the union of simple lines, an overall equilibrium and harmony are conveyed. The compactness and strong aesthetics stem from the uniformity and symmetry of geometric lines, imbuing a sense of calmness and steadiness. Simultaneously, geometric lines induce thoughts about space and form, prompting boundless imagination. Different combinations and perspectives of these geometric lines constitute a variety of vibrant artistic images (Huang Zongxian, 2013).

Square

Square pattern, out of the three basic shapes of square, circle, and triangle, is the most commonly utilized and varied geometric form. It embodies numerous configurations, such as crossing, overlapping, displacing, and linking. When two square parts intersect, creating a diamond shape, it's named as "square victory".

Hexagon

The hexagon represents a balance between fluidity and sharpness, signifying the harmony of six directions. In society, individuals cannot be as seamless as a circle or as sharp as a square or triangle. Being like a hexagon – holding and maintaining one's position – is what gives regular efforts significance (Pan Ping, 2013).

Octagon

It embodies the five elements and eight trigrams. The five elements give rise to yin and yang, the two opposing energies, which are the origin of everything in existence. The blending of yin and yang leads to the growth of all entities, signifying that a family, akin to yin and yang, alternates but is everlasting. Even though the world undergoes changes, everything manages to maintain its original form. It signifies harmony among all families (Wu Si, 2017).

Circle

Smooth and balanced, the circle stands for nature. It can symbolize unity and familial happiness. The circle can also represent flawlessness and completeness (Xu Jun, 2010).

Principles


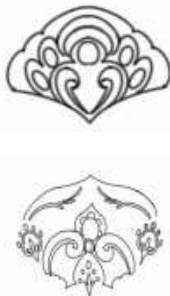
The 'baoxianghua' designs in the Dun Huang caves extend beyond mere aesthetic value; they comply with principles of formal beauty, symbolize spiritual meanings, and are replete with symbolic significance. These designs, deriving from the lotus flower, inherit its grace and nobility while infusing the auspicious essence of pomegranate and the opulence of peony designs, reflecting the people's perceptions and aspirations. Within the Mo Gao Caves of the Tang Dynasty, 'baoxianghua' designs exhibit considerable decorative properties, from their overall layout to their minute particulars. They are meticulously

crafted to match their setting and desired ambiance, utilizing forms and hues to communicate spiritual implications and enhance the aesthetic and visual capacities of adornment. Symmetry was integral in forming 'baoxianghua' patterns, showcasing an array of techniques like central, bilateral, and axial symmetry. The design procedures often commenced with erecting a vertically-horizontal line acting as a midpoint, and consequently expanding the motif in all directions, yielding a balanced and harmonious aesthetic appeal.

These designs employ a range of symmetry methods, including center, bilateral, and axial symmetry, creating a harmonious visual appeal. The designs typically originate from a central symmetry point and radiate outwards, using a "metre" sketching grid for a measured and orderly framework. The main and subsidiary features in the designs are clearly identifiable, adding to their dignity, stability, and equilibrium. Color is crucial in boosting the rhythmic perception of 'baoxianghua' designs. The Tang Dynasty introduced colors such as vermilion, scarlet, and differing hues of earthy yellow added to stone blue and stone green, producing a vibrant rhythm through fine variations and abundant layers. The employment of light, medium, and deep tones contributes to depth and diversity.

The designs are highlighted with white lines in lighter sections and black lines in darker ones. They grasp the essence of natural floral forms, facilitating versatile compositions that merge changing floral designs with leaf placements and vine expansions. This blend of uniformity and variation, symmetry and equilibrium, infuses the designs with rhythmic appeal, merging serenity with motion and simplicity with intricacy. The 'baoxianghua' designs not only replicate the natural appearance of flowers but also embellish and animate it, illustrating a tidy, lavish, and noble structure. This coincides with the opulent and dignified symbolism of 'baoxianghua' designs in the Tang Dynasty, underscoring their striking and symbolic.

The 'baoxianghua' designs in the Tang Dynasty are overflowing with rhythmic connotations, marked by internal symmetry and a regular, systematic structure. The designs include moderately packed, uniformly placed elements, like the complex branches of honeysuckle, coiling grapevines, pomegranate stalks, and cascading cloud patterns. These designs strike a balance between solidity and lively motion, generating a sensation of orderliness and rhythm laced with romance. Table 2 shows the canonical petal shapes identified in this study.

	Digital drawing	Petal Shape	Caves
1			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 334 of Early Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang















2			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 49 of Prosperous Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
3			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 45 of Prosperous Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
4			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 166 of Prosperous Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
5			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 46 of Prosperous Tang in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
6			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 201 of Mid-Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
7			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 154 of Mid-Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang
8			Diagram of 'baoxianghua' pattern in Cave 9 of Last Tang Dynasty in Mo Gao caves, Dun Huang

Table 2: The Lists 'baoxianghua'Petals

The study evaluated the most emblematic 'baoxianghua' designs from four distinct periods of the Tang Dynasty, focusing on the discrete petals derived from digital sketches. The

findings indicated substantial evolution in the shape of the petals over time. In the early Tang Dynasty, the petals generally exhibited sharp-edged, side-curling lotus flowers, a technique that greatly impacted the holistic structure of the 'baoxianghua' designs. This era also introduced folded or cloud-curved peony petals, accompanied by curly grass designs.

As the Tang Dynasty continued, especially during the late period, there was a transition to a wishful cloud pattern in the shape of a circular arc, often paired with camellia petals. Also notable was a transformation in the number and kinds of elements making up the 'baoxianghua' patterns. From the start to the end of the Tang Dynasty, the patterns' organization became less complex, emphasizing fewer elements. While the patterns initially demonstrated a combination of common elements such as lotus, peony, camellia, Ru yi patterns, and curly grass, they eventually primarily featured more simplistic themes, largely camellia and Ru yi.

Evolutionary Characteristics of 'baoxianghua' patterns

The evolutionary traits of the 'baoxianghua' designs during the Tang Dynasty can be encapsulated in three primary facets:

Transition from Figurative Realism to Abstract Generalization: At the outset, 'baoxianghua' designs in the early Tang Dynasty, under the influence of the Sui Dynasty, portrayed genuine plant elements. However, at the height of the Tang Dynasty, these designs progressively became more abstract and stylized, deviating from their organic forms. This abstract tendency intensified in the middle and late Tang Dynasty, where designs became less complex and placed more emphasis on abstract depictions of natural elements, utilizing only a few ornamental floral components in recurrent combinations.

From Differentiated Design to Patterned Decoration: 'Baoxianghua' designs in the early Tang Dynasty were extremely diverse, with each design being distinct. This variety slowly decreased, with patterns becoming more standardized by the latter half of the Tang Dynasty, exhibiting minimal variations. In the late Tang Dynasty, designs, particularly in the Ping Qi Cave, appeared almost homogenous, arranged in alternating patterns with minor modifications to the petals but with similar comprehensive structures.

Shift from Single to Collective Decoration: In the early Tang Dynasty, cave paintings prioritized the individualism of each 'baoxianghua' design without much regard to overall adornment. This shifted after the mid-Tang Dynasty, as designs began to be used more frequently in group architectural decorations, emphasizing the aesthetic influence of reiterated simple elements. As a result, the diversity in individual patterns became less critical, resulting in a decrease in the inventiveness and vibrancy of hand-drawn 'baoxianghua' designs. This trend reached its peak in the Song Dynasty, where all designs seemed identical.

During the Wei-Jin-North and South Dynasties in ancient China, a crucial shift occurred in the realm of decorative arts, primarily signified by the introduction of floral themes, including the Lonicera twining pattern. This design blended foreign hues with traditional lotus motifs. These intricate designs first garnished religious artifacts before adorning secular crafts. The Tang Dynasty bore witness to an escalation of popularity of floral patterns, including peonies, chrysanthemums, and Baoxiang patterns. These designs, renowned for their lush and vivid compositions, ornamented a multitude of items ranging

from textiles to wall paintings. Such designs, representing the cultural diversity and openness of the Tang period, were frequently exhibited in various styles on clothing, like the Tuan Ke or folded branch patterns. The Bao Xiang Hua design, an elegant fusion of lonicera and lotus, distinguished itself with its stylized petals and compelling aesthetic. The Tang Dynasty brought in new flora-inspired designs like the Tang grape damask and early Tang Guanyin skirt pattern, highlighting the lively and vibrant spirit of the period through seamless, soft designs and fluid lines. This marked a progressive transition from abstract towards more naturalistic floral depictions in Chinese artistic tradition (The Blossoming Beauty of Tang Dynasty Costume Fabrics: A Study of Floral Motifs - Newhanfu, 2023). The 'baoxianghua' designs in the Tang Dynasty illustrate obvious transformation characteristics in terms of configuration and style. The typical pattern structure during the early and high Tang era displayed a cross or an eight-sided figure, characterized by radial symmetry. As the kingdom advanced, especially post mid-Tang, there was a shift to radially hexagonal structures with a focus on centro symmetry. The number of petals within these patterns underwent evolution. It began predominantly with four petals in the early Tang, then transitioned to eight petals in the high Tang, and eventually evolved into a standard of six or five petals in the subsequent periods.

The intricacy of the 'baoxianghua' patterns transformed gradually. In the early phases of the Tang Dynasty, these designs were exemplified by detailed layer modifications and an intricate mesh of overlapping components. Over time, the complexity diminished, diminishing from 8 to 10 layers during the high Tang, and condensing to around 3 layers in the latter part of the Tang Dynasty.

The intrinsic spatial dynamics of the 'baoxianghua' patterns experienced substantial transformations. Initially preserving a plausible balance of pictorial and background space, these patterns during the Tang Dynasty gradually shifted focus towards accentuating the figurative aspects. By mid-Tang, the components of the floral arrangement streamlined and the structuring became denser. Towards the end of the Tang Dynasty, prominent individual 'baoxianghua' patterns became less common with the designs frequently showcasing a flat, iterative pattern arrangement. This evolution in pattern development was also influenced by alterations in the cave architecture over time.

The concluding examination of the 'baoxianghua' designs in the Tang Dynasty entails a broad appraisal employing both visual investigation and iconographic techniques. Visual investigation zeroes in on two facets: the progression of these designs from illustrative to abstract form, and the analysis of elements such as "line" and "space" within their design. This methodology enables a more lucid comprehension of the artistic dialect expressed in the designs, incorporating a "geometric" analysis of their spatial organization.

Iconography is employed to probe into the connotations of the 'baoxianghua' designs from four viewpoints: balance and symmetry, completeness, pace, and broad symbolism. This technique uncovers the exceptional artistry of the Tang Dynasty 'baoxianghua' designs in the Mo Gao Caves, renowned for their hue and dynamism.

The attributes and connotations of the 'baoxianghua' designs are mutually reliant. The structural traits of these designs align with the principles of balance and symmetry, while their artistic language's development correlates with ideas of wholeness and rhythm. Furthermore, the cultural relevance of these designs is mirrored in their symbolism. This

holistic assessment emphasizes the profound connection between the structural and symbolic facets of the 'baoxianghua' designs in the Tang Dynasty.

In Search for Meaning

During the Tang Dynasty, the 'baoxianghua' design was distinguished by the use of complete or halved flowers as its base unit. The external structure of the pattern is robust and voluminous, representing magnificence, solemnity, sanctity, and dignity. This design principle stems from the traditional cultural value of "fullness," mirroring the aesthetic ideology of harmonious roundness prevalent in ancient Chinese thought, illustrated by phrases like "flowers are perfect and the moon is round" and the philosophy of "the way of the square circle." This highlights the significance of the circle in traditional aesthetic formats.

Moreover, the "completeness" of the 'baoxianghua' design is methodical and organized, not random. It presents consistent alterations in form, with individual components such as petals, buds, branches, and leaves being naturally linked and symmetrically arranged. This leads to a systematic, tiered composition, culminating in a harmonious and complete "full" circle.

The 'baoxianghua' designs in the Mo Gao caves exemplify the common botanical motifs of the Tang Dynasty, amalgamating a variety of elements such as lotus, honeysuckle, pomegranate, cloud, and peony. Heavily rooted in the lotus motif, these designs intertwine Western elements like honeysuckle and pomegranate with traditional Chinese motifs, namely cloud and peony, crafting a distinctive ornamental style that fuses Western and local artistic traits. The evolution of the ancient Silk Road during the Wei, Jin, Sui, and Tang Dynasties resulted in the introduction of an array of ornamental plant motifs into China, amongst them was the Baoxiang pattern. The combination of native and foreign ornamental plant motifs brought forth the emergence of decorative designs that held a distinctively Chinese aesthetic essence (Analysis of the Evolution of Baoxiang Pattern, and I Was Amazed by the Small Pattern - INEWS, 2023). This integration of Western ornamental components with Chinese artistic sensibilities signifies a blending spirit, instilling traditional pre-Tang Dynasty botanical designs with foreign vigor and liveliness. In addition to adopting foreign botanical figures for petal depictions, the 'baoxianghua' designs also assimilate indigenous Chinese floral forms such as peony, peonies, and plum blossoms, modifying these to resonate with the cultural and aesthetic tastes of the Chinese population. This combination mirrors the cultural interplay between Chinese and Western influences and accentuates the cultural relevance of the 'baoxianghua' designs.

The 'baoxianghua' designs are marked by two main components: acknowledging the uniqueness of various entities and smoothly merging these disparities into a unified entity. They compile diverse floral and plant elements from nature, fusing them into balanced, symmetrical patterns that exceed both the natural configuration of the flora and any foreign artistic impacts. The subsequent designs, which encompass flowers, leaves, and fruits, are intricate yet harmonious, encapsulating the philosophical tenets of Chinese culture.

In classical Chinese culture, flowers extend beyond being just decorative flora; they are vital beings with individual attributes and spiritual importance, signifying different qualities. The 'baoxianghua' designs, initially derived from the lotus symbolizing innocence and holiness, persist to encapsulate the spiritual kernel of the lotus, mirroring tranquility

and nobility. In the late Tang Dynasty, with the incorporation of peony elements, these designs transitioned towards secularism, resulting in their extensive application in diverse art forms post-Tang Dynasty, hence acquiring a worldlier and fortunate connotation.

On the whole, 'baoxianghua' designs signify an effective fusion of natural and artistic elegance. During the Tang Dynasty, they accomplished unmatched aesthetic and emblematic importance. In the current pursuit for a novel visual language, the examination of these traditional patterns provides crucial motivation towards comprehending the visual cultural implications of the 'baoxianghua' designs.

CONCLUSION

The 'baoxianghua' patterns from the Tang Dynasty express an exceptional fusion of structural features and profound meanings, illustrating a remarkable co-dependence between their tangible structure and symbolic implication. The design's structural elements are tightly intertwined with the principles of harmony and symmetry. This connection not only underlines their visual charm but also indicates a profound sense of balance and proportion ingrained in their formation.

Besides their structural features, the evolution of the 'baoxianghua' patterns' artistic expressions is intimately linked to ideas of integrity and rhythm. These components give the designs their all-encompassing unity and dynamic flow, imbuing them with a sense of fullness and fluid motion. This aspect of the patterns emphasizes the precise focus on detail and thoughtful deliberation of compositional movement that were hallmarks of the Tang Dynasty's artistic prowess.

Furthermore, the cultural significance of these designs is mirrored in their abundant symbolism. The 'baoxianghua' designs serve not merely as artistic impressions; they also bear cultural and historical significance, echoing the norms and philosophies of the period. This symbolic aspect enlivens the designs, elevating them beyond being just ornamental features. A comprehensive evaluation of the 'baoxianghua' designs accentuates the deep connection between their structural attributes and symbolic connotations, displaying the sophisticated artistry and cultural relevance of art from the Tang Dynasty.

The 'baoxianghua' designs, while grounded in balance and symmetry, open up to a range of interpretations due to their structural subtleties. This variance in structure paves the way for diverse comprehensions, echoing the complex character of these designs. These patterns not only portray aspects of Chinese culture but also encompass particular cultural connotations shaped by their unique elements and arrangements. The abundance in their design provides for a wide array of cultural representations, exhibiting the profundity of Chinese artistic heritage.

Regarding conceptual motifs, the 'baoxianghua' designs traverse between balance, symmetry, and wholeness. While balance and symmetry highlight the equal interaction among different elements of the design, the notion of wholeness encapsulates a broader understanding of unity and cohesiveness. This idea surpasses simple symmetry, implying a more profound, integrative structure.

The rhythm inherent in numerous 'baoxianghua' designs implies flux and advancement, contradicting others that display a stiller depiction. These static representations concentrate

on communicating constant, unaltered notions or ideas, underlining the adaptability of 'baoxianghua' designs in expressing diverse artistic objectives.

Lastly, the understanding of 'baoxianghua' designs in the Dun Huang caves is shaped by their setting. The connotations extracted from these designs go beyond their pictorial components, as the caves' historical and cultural context imparts additional complexity to their comprehension. This contextual richness enhances the designs, elevating them beyond being mere artistic illustrations.

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