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NATIONAL UNIQUENESS AND DECORATION OF THE GÙGŌNG, THE IMPERIAL (HANG DA) PALACE IN BEIJING

Abstract: The article defines the historical background, town-planning significance, the principles of construction of the volume-spatial composition, the peculiarities of decoration of the Gùgōng, in China, the largest in the world palace complex, development of which continued during the Ming and Qing dynasties periods. The symbolism of decorative elements and polychromy is analyzed. The article presents basic concepts that characterize the traditional Chinese architecture.

In Chinese architecture and works of art, a special role was given to symbolic decoration and polychromy, which was also marked by a certain symbolic meaning.

Determined that traditional Chinese architecture is characterized by the following concepts associated with the construction of buildings of various functional purposes, traditional beliefs, elements of structures and symbols: tradition (Chuan tong), architecture (Jian zhu), temple (Si miao), pagoda (Bao ta), palace (Gong dian), park (Gong yuan), Daoism or Taoism (Gao xue), Confucianism (Yu xue), Buddhism (Fuo xue), interior (Shi nei), paintings (Bi hua), arbor (Ting zi), symbol (Fu hao), roof (Wu ding), support or pillar (Zhu zi), folding screen (Ping feng), timber (Mu cai), lotus (Lian hua), dragon (Long). The main colours of traditional Chinese polychromy are the following colours (yan se): red (Hong se de), golden (Yang se de), blue (Lan se de), green (Lv se de), white (Bai se de).

Comparative analysis of polychromy of everyday objects, works of art and architecture shows the dominance of open colors and simple images in ancient times and the gradual diversity of compositions and polychromy since the Song and Tang dynasties.

Complicating the plot and polychromatic diversity took place in the Yuan period, whereas in the Ming period (XIV c.) formed a certain standard of fresco paintings and decor of religious and secular character, which is concentrated in the ensemble of the Gùgōng Imperial Palace).

The location of the palace complex of the Ming and Qing dynasties in the city, the design of the complex itself, its architectural image and the smallest details, reflected a hierarchy of the social structure of the state, symbolized the divine majesty of imperial power, reflected the foundations of philosophy and religious teachings. All the main halls of the outer and inner palaces are grouped into groups of three – according to the format of the trigram of ‘Cyan’, which symbolizes the Sky.

Key words: regional features, the Gùgōng Palace, the Ming Dynasty, traditional Chinese architecture, decor, symbolic meaning, cultural traditions, colours.

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Statement of the problem.

Traditional Chinese architecture and art were formed under the influence of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, local cultural traditions and peculiarities of socio-political system.

Given the interest in Chinese architecture outside China, dating back to the 18th century, and the attempt to build Chinese-style structures, one must understand the regional features of Chinese architecture that are concentrated in the Gùgōng Imperial Palace ensemble.

Traditional Chinese architecture is characterized by the following concepts associated with the construction of buildings of various functional purposes, traditional beliefs, elements of structures and symbols: tradition (*Chuan tong*), architecture (*Jian zhu*), temple (*Si miao*), pagoda (*Bao ta*), palace (*Gong dian*), park (*Gong yuan*), Daoism or Taoism (*Gao xue*), Confucianism (*Yu xue*), Buddhism (*Fuo xue*), interior (*Shi nei*), paintings (*Bi hua*), arbor (*Ting zi*), symbol (*Fu hao*), roof (*Wu ding*), support or pillar (*Zhu zi*), folding screen (*Ping feng*), timber (*Mu cai*), lotus (*Lian hua*), dragon (*Long*). The main colours of traditional Chinese polychromy are the following *colours (yan se)*: red (*Hong se de*), golden (*Yang se de*), blue (*Lan se de*), green (*Lv se de*), white (*Bai se de*).

Analysis of recent researches and publications.

Among the publications on ancient Chinese architecture, it is worth mentioning works of Akhmetshin, N.Kh. [1], Belova, Ye.Yu. [2], Kogan, D.R. [3], Kolpakova, A.V. [4,5], Lou Chinsi [6].

The aim of the article is to briefly describe the regional features of ancient Chinese architecture, especially the example of the Gùgōng ensemble.

The presentation of the main research material. From ancient times, wide decoration was widely used in Chinese buildings and household items. Thus, decorative wall paintings (*Bi hua*) originate from ancient times, from simple rock images of the Stone Age and paintings of tableware (2000 BC).

Even in ancient times, the ceramic tableware was ornamented with bright open colours, but the drawings were of quite simple forms. In later times, in the periods of the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907), drawings gradually became more complicated, they became multi-figured, with a plot, with great attention to details. These periods are marked by images of “flying fairies” (paintings of the Mogao Caves near the city of Dunhuang, Gansu province), and these are mainly religious subjects.

In the Yuan period (the 12th-13th centuries) the paintings were more varied in plots and distributed in geography; they appear in temples and table-tombs. People, landscapes, flowers and birds are depicted in fresco temple murals.

During the Ming dynasty period (the 14th century) fresco paintings acquire a more standardized character, the paintings decorate both religious and secular buildings, they depict both fantastic plots and the scenes from real life.

The world-famous complex of the imperial palace, which is now referred to as the Gùgōng (Chinese: 故宫, literally the former imperial palace), is dated just by the

Ming period. However, the name of the Gùgōng is the common name of the former imperial palaces in China. In addition to Gùgōng in Beijing, this name applies to the National Palace Museum, located in Taipei and Taibao, Chiayi County, Taiwan; the Mukden Palace or the Shenyang Imperial Palace of the early Qing Dynasty in Shenyang (Mukden), and partially destroyed the Ming Dynasty Palace in Nanjing.

Now it is necessary to speak about historical Background of the Construction of the Gùgōng in Beijing and about the Architecture and Construction Canons of the Ming Dynasty.

After the expulsion of the Mongol invaders from China, the local Ming dynasty (the 14th-17th centuries) came to power. Against the background of the aggravation of internal social contradictions and foreign policy, a trend of the absolutization of political power in a person of the emperor was observed, they ruled the country based on the existing governance system. Such steps contributed to the development of the economy, production, creating private manufactures in the 15th century, and afterward, resulted in the reinforcement of trade unions of manufacturers for fighting for their economic and political rights. These processes continued in parallel with the deepening of social contradictions between the classes, which ultimately led to popular uprisings of the 30-40s of the 17th century.

During the rule of the Ming Dynasty, the conservatism of the state structure is preserved. In culture and art, they preserve, enrich and develop the traditions of the previous periods. It was also reflected in

the architecture, which depended on the social hierarchy. This fact influenced the types of structures of various functional purposes, their planning, size and decor. In particular, the planning of buildings and palace complexes was regulated by laws and treatises based on the Yíngzào Fǎshì, literally: "Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards" of the Sòng Dynasty period. The town planning and construction of palaces, temples and defence buildings were carried out by the Gunba Ministry of Civil Engineering, which consisted of four departments, each of them had own scope of activity – buildings, parks and water bodies, irrigation works, and fortification defence system. The competence of these four departments included the choice of a site for construction, developing architectural projects and budgeting. They preserved the forms of organizing the construction of previous periods of Tang and Song dynasties. The main changes in architecture compared with previous periods included the improvement of traditional layouts, architectural forms, structures, and decor.

The characteristic features of the architecture of the Ming era: large-scale city-building palace, temple and park complexes, imperial tombs (mausoleums) and irrigation facilities, it is especially noticeable in the development of the 14th–15th centuries. This is a period of active growth and development of the cities of Beijing (Peking) and Nanjing (Nanking). These cities are known for their systematic planning. They became the main centres for the development of trade and handicrafts, and the site of the provincial

administration. Suzhou, Jingdezhen (or the Town of Jingde), Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Wuchang become large economic and cultural centres. There is a differentiation of cities according to the profiles of production and functional zoning within the cities into districts by profession.

The cities of the 14th-17th centuries preserve the character of defensive fortresses, and the growth of brick production contributed to the strengthening of fortification defence systems. At the same time, the development of decorative art contributed to an increase in the role of decor in the architecture of buildings of various functional purposes.

Besides the little architectural forms in the palace and temple architecture, the ancient traditions of ornament and plot paintings preserved. The palace architecture of the Ming era follows the canons of the *Yíngzào Fǎshì* treatise, regular city-planning and monumentality inherited from the Han and Tang Dynasties era, the refinement and architectural variety, inherited from the Sung Dynasty era.

Emperor Zhu Di (Chéngzǔ, 1403-1424) concerned the development of Beijing (Peking), the northern capital of the state which based on the capital of the Yuan Dadu era. Beijing quickly evolved into an important administrative political and strategical centre, from 1421 – a capital. According to the regular planning in the city centre, there was so-called the Forbidden City (Chinese: 紫禁城 pinyin: Zǐjìnchéng; literally: Purple Forbidden City), the area of the imperial palace, around which was the area of the Imperial

city with parks, state temples, administrations and residences.

It is necessary to describe the characteristics of the Gùgōng complex, its town-planning and architectural significance.

The Purple Forbidden City (Zijin Cheng) (now – Gùgōng) is the main palace complex of the 24 Chinese emperors, from the Ming dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty (the years 1421 to 1912) is the largest palace complex in the world, 961 x 753 meters in size, with a total area of 720 thousand square meters; it consists of 980 buildings. This complex had a significant impact on the cultural and architectural development of the whole of East Asia. In 1987, it was the first Chinese landmark to be declared a World Heritage Site and it is listed by UNESCO as the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world.

The name Zijin Cheng has several meanings: Zi or “Purple”, refers to the North Star, which in ancient China was called the Ziwei Star and in traditional Chinese astrology it was considered the heavenly abode of the Celestial Emperor. The Forbidden City, as the residence of the terrestrial emperor, was its earthly counterpart. Jin, or “Forbidden”, referred to the fact that no one could enter or leave the palace without the emperor’s permission. The status of the Forbidden City was underlined by the surrounding moats and purple-red walls. Only the emperor, his family members and courtiers could be within the walls of the palace. Cheng means city.

In the southern part of the Forbidden City, on the territory of the huge yard there

are the most important buildings of the imperial palace complex: Taihe dian (the Hall of Supreme Harmony, Chinese: 太和殿), Zhōng Hé Diàn (the Hall of Central Harmony, Chinese: 中殿), and Bǎo Hé Diàn (the Hall of Preserving Harmony, Chinese: 保和殿). These are the throne halls on a three-tiered white marble terrace, the main halls where the emperor fulfilled his official duties. There were the imperial residential chambers in the northern part of the Forbidden City.

The buildings of the southern part of the palace complex were subject to the hierarchy and created a particular impression of grandeur and solemnity when approaching the throne hall. The whole complex is observed only from the top of the artificial hill Jingshan immediately north of the Forbidden City.

Religious buildings and structures held a special place in the functional purposes of the imperial palace complex buildings. Daoism (Taoism), the traditional Chinese religion, was of great importance in the Ming and Qing eras - two Taoist shrines were built in the imperial garden and in the central part of the Inner Palace.

Buddhism was of great importance in the times of the Ming dynasty, so there were many temples and shrines within the Inner Palace, and Buddhist iconography was in the interiors of the Pavilion of Raining Flowers and other pavilions along with Indian statues and mandalas. During the reign of the Qing Dynasty, the Palace of Earthly Tranquillity was the venue for the ceremonies of the Manchus.

The construction of the imperial palace complex, in which the main facades

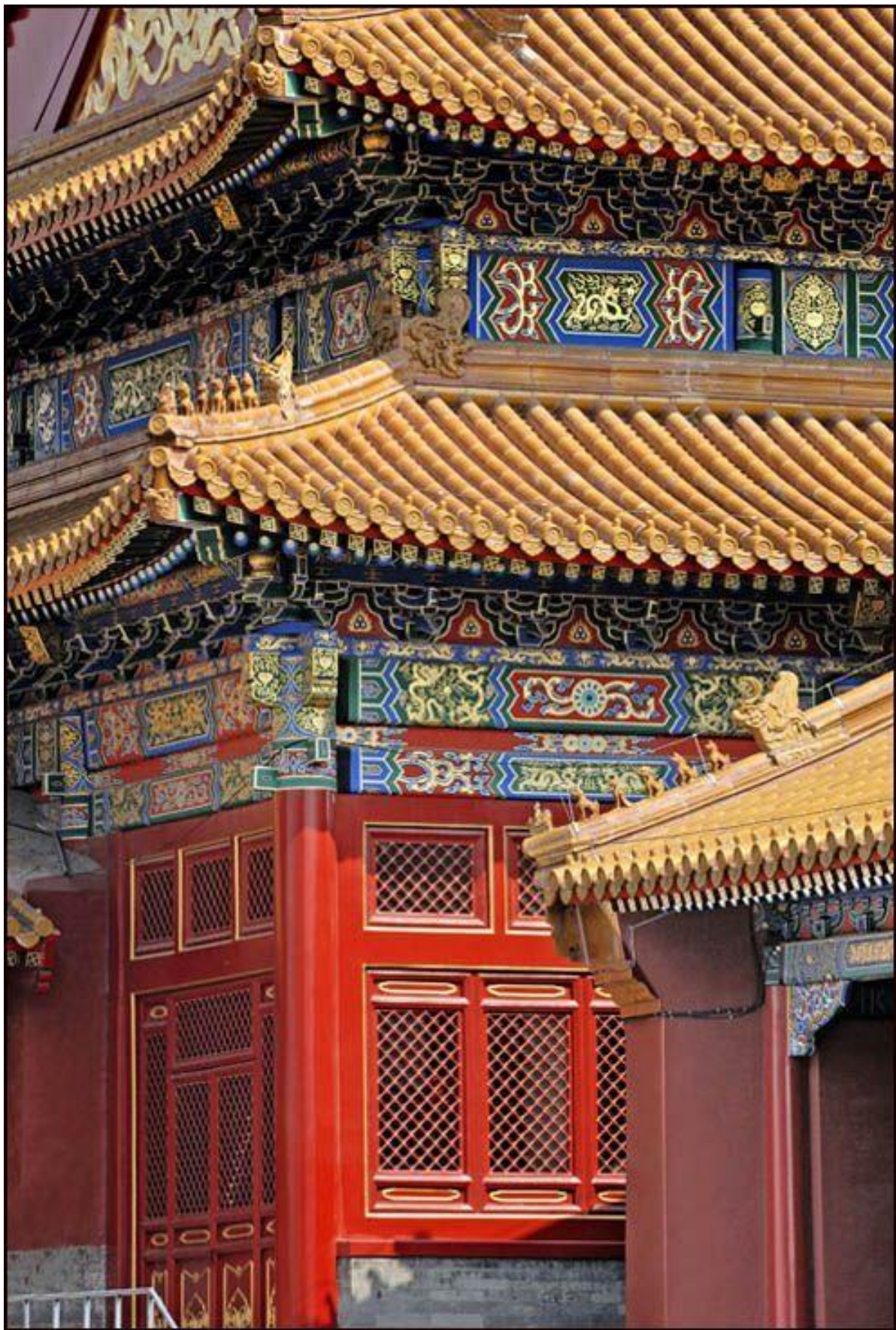
of all building components are of a southern orientation, was the last such large-scale palace construction in China. It lasted from 1403 till 1421. The palace complex almost preserved its original planned structure.

Though in the 17th-18th centuries, the open galleries were replaced with deaf walls, it worsened the compositional relationship between the individual buildings of the complex. A hundred thousand stone and wood carvers, artists and up to a million builders were engaged in decorative works.

The best materials were used for the construction of palace buildings: pillars of the most important halls were made of whole logs of precious Phoebe zhennan wood (Chinese: 楠木; pinyin: nánmù) found in the jungles of south-western China. The great pillars seen today were rebuilt using multiple pieces of pinewood in the Qing Dynasty.

The grand terraces and large stone carvings were made of stone from quarries near Beijing. As it was impossible to deliver heavy pieces using conventional methods, wells were dug along the way, and water from which was poured on the road in deep winter. The stones were dragged along a layer of ice.

The decorative elements, colour scale, and symbolic drawings played an important role in the aesthetic perception of the palace complex. One of the most accentual and the most expressive elements of the ancient Chinese architecture is a roof; its shape and colour demonstrated the social status of the owner of the building (Fig. 2).



*Fig.1. Fragment of facades with polychrome painting, ceramic figures on the roof and wooden elements.
(From the funds of Chang Peng).*



*Fig.2. The fragment of the roof of the secondary pavilion with ceramic tiles and animal figures.
The number of figures indicates the status of the building.
(From the funds of Chang Peng).*

A spacious grand palace court is surrounded by a continuous strip of exquisite magnificently decorated gold roofs of buildings since the yellow colour was the colour of imperial power.

The court is closed by the highest pavilion of the complex and the highest building in Beijing during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the main throne hall for the main ceremonies – Taihe dian (the Hall of Supreme Harmony).

The pavilion is surmounted by a two-tiered roof with golden tiles, the visual relief of which is achieved thanks to the raised ends of the roof.

The roof of the pavilion is decorated with figures of people and animals, and a special place among them is occupied by the symbol of a Dragon. The central place

in the interior is occupied by the throne of the Dragon, surrounded by six gilded wooden columns with carved images of dragons. Graceful bronze cranes stand before the throne – symbols of success and good fortune, burners and copper vessels.

Set into the ceiling at the centre of the hall is an intricate caisson decorated with a coiled dragon, from the mouth of it a set of metal balls are flying, called the "Xuanyuan Mirror".

In the Ming dynasty, the Emperor held court here to discuss affairs of state. Later in the Qing era, the Hall of Supreme Harmony was used only for ceremonial purposes, such as coronation or imperial wedding.

Decorative elements with a particular symbolic meaning were used in the

decoration of the palace complex. For example, brilliant bronze ornaments on the gates surfaces constructively concealed the fastening nails and at the same time their number – at each half of the gate, 81 (9 rows of 9 ornaments) – indicated the exceptional position of the Son of Heaven in the public hierarchy.

Zhōng Hé Diàn, the Hall of Central Harmony was somewhat more modest, it was used by the Emperor to prepare and rest before and during ceremonies. By the reduced model of the Zhōng Hé Diàn, the third pavilion – Bǎo Hé Diàn, the Hall of Preserving Harmony was built.

The northern ramp, behind the Hall of Preserving Harmony, is carved from a single piece of stone, which weighs 260 tonnes with the paintings of nine dragons playing with pearls.

The three halls of the Inner Court consisted of the apartments of the Emperor, Empress, princes, princesses and concubines. The Palace of Heavenly Purity, or Qianqing Palace (Chinese: 乾清宫; pinyin: qiánqīng gōng) was the largest of the three halls of the Inner Court.

The floors of the representative halls were paved with «golden brick» (Chinese: 金砖, pinyin: jīnzhūān) from baked clay from seven counties of Suzhou and Songjiang provinces, which had been made for several months. Most of the still-preserved inner tilings go back six centuries.

At the four corners of the defensive walls there were towers with intricate roofs, decorated with 72 ridges reproducing the Yellow Crane Pavilions they appeared in the paintings of the Song era. These towers were iconic elements of

the palace complex for the population that could not enter the Forbidden City. It is known that the towers were repaired during the Qing dynasty. On each side of the high defensive walls there are gates: the main ones – the Meridian Gate (South) in the southern wall, the Gate of Divine Might (or Gate of Divine Prowess Valour) in the northern wall, the East Glorious Gate in the eastern wall and the West Glorious Gate in the western wall.

A part of the so-called ceremonial Imperial Way, which leads to the terraces from the south and north, are ramps with exquisite and complex carvings in the bas-relief technique, which express a certain symbolic meaning.

The Inner Court, unlike the ceremonial Outer Court, was intended for the imperial chambers and the chambers of members of the imperial family. In the centre of the Inner Court there are three main halls: the Palace of Heavenly Purity (Chinese: 乾清宫, Qianqing Palace) (The Emperor's residence, symbol of Yang and Heaven), the Hall of Union (Chinese: 交泰殿; pinyin: Jiāo Tài Diàn) and Palace of Earthly Tranquillity (Chinese: 坤宁宫; pinyin: Kūn Níng Gōng) (The residence of the Empress, the symbol of Yin and Earth). The Palace of Heavenly Purity is a building on a terrace of white marble, the roof of the pavilion is decorated with a caisson with a meandering dragon. The Palace of Earthly Tranquillity also has two cornices. The Hall of Union between these pavilions symbolizes the fusion of Yang and Yin and has a pyramidal roof. There are imperial seals of the Qing dynasty and other ceremonial accessories.

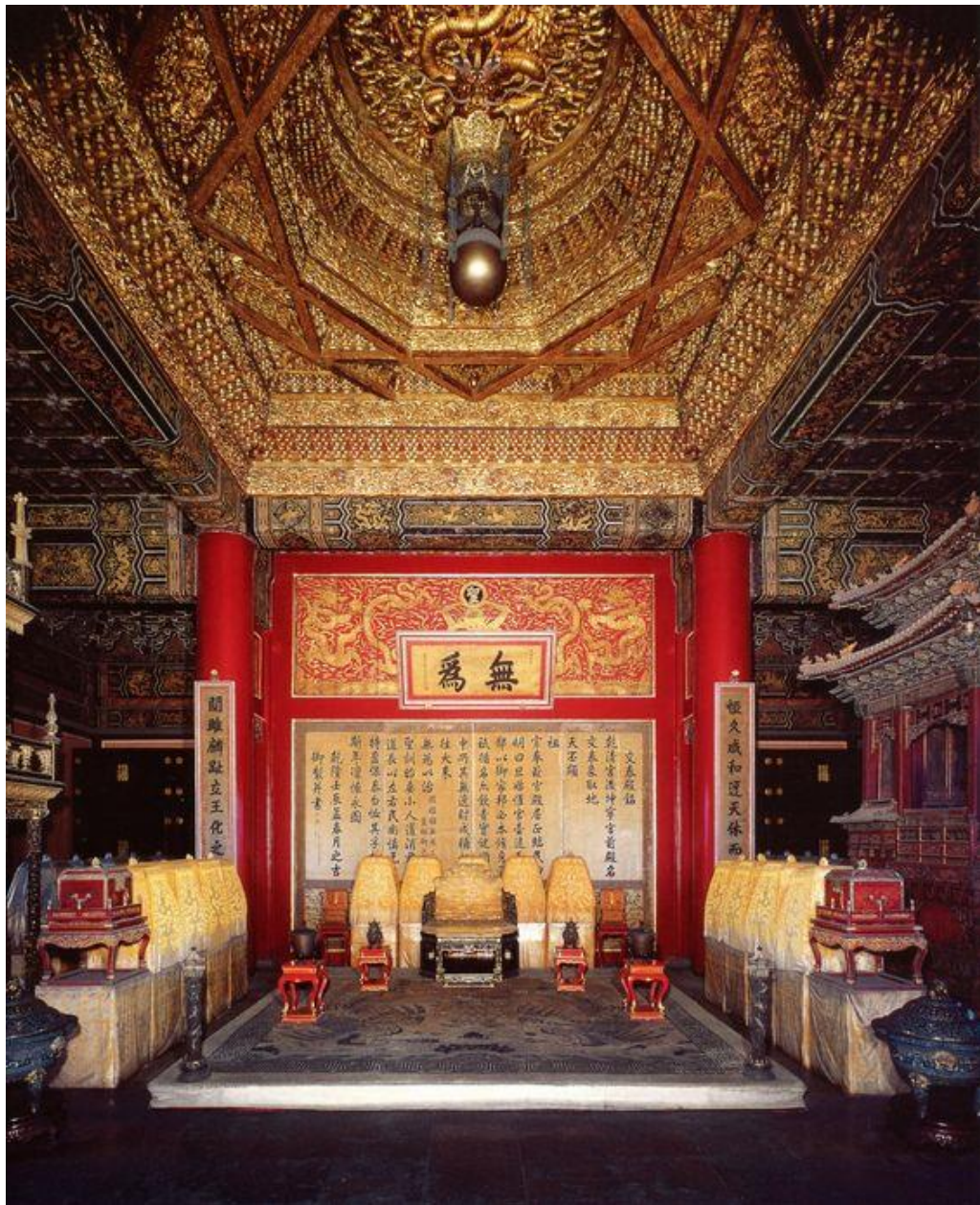


Fig.3. Polychromic interior.

The planes of the walls, ceiling, and structural elements cover the area of solid décor (From the funds of Chang Peng).

Conclusions of the particular study

Thus, the location of the palace complex of the Ming and Qing dynasties in the city, the design of the complex itself, its architectural image and the smallest details, reflected a hierarchy of the social structure of the state, symbolized the divine majesty of imperial power, reflected the foundations of philosophy and religious teachings. All the main halls of the outer

and inner palaces are grouped into groups of three – according to the format of the trigram of ‘Cyan’, which symbolizes the Sky. The residences of the Inner Court are organized in groups of six – according to the trigram of Kun, which symbolizes the Earth. The planning of buildings corresponded to the ancient traditions of the Li Ji treatise: the temples of the ancestors were located in front of the

palace, the tombs were in the front part of the palace complex, the residential area was in the back end.

Various ceramic images of animals on the roofs served not only as an element of decor and fastened the slopes and protected the roofs from leaking, but also symbolized human virtues – well-being, courage, and determination. In front is a man riding on Phoenix, and behind him is an imperial dragon, and the number of figures on the roof was not random and reflected the status of the building: a small pavilion was decorated with 3-5 figures, the Hall of Supreme Harmony – 10, the tenth figure was called "Hangshy" (Chinese: 行, pinyin: Hángshí).

Polychromy plays a special role. As already noted, the yellow colour was the colour of the Emperor, therefore all the roofs of the Forbidden City, were covered with yellow glazed tiles. There were two exceptions: the Library at the Pavilion of Literary Profundity with black tiles and the residence of the Crown Prince's residences with green tiles.

On the example of the Gùgōng ensemble the characteristic features of representative architecture of the Ming period are revealed.

Prospects for further research in this field. The analysis of scientific sources proves the need to identify the regional features of the Gùgōng Palace in Beijing, compared to palaces in other regions of China and with religious buildings. This opens up directions for further exploration of the unique UNESCO site.

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Аннотация

Чан Пен. Национальное своеобразие и декоративная отделка в императорском (huang da) дворце Гугун в Пекине. В статье определены исторические предпосылки, градостроительное значение, принципы построения объемно-пространственной композиции, особенности декорирования крупнейшего дворцового ансамбля мира – Гугун в Китае, развитие которого продолжалась в течение периодов Мин и Цин. Проанализированы символика декоративных элементов и полихромии. Приведены основные понятия, характеризующие традиционную китайскую архитектуру.

В китайской архитектуре и произведениях искусства особая роль отводилась символическому декору и полихромии, которая также отмечалась определенным символическим смыслом.

Сравнительный анализ полихромии предметов быта, произведений искусства и архитектуры свидетельствует о доминировании открытых цветов и простых изображений в давние времена и постепенное разнообразия композиций и полихромии начиная с династий Сун и Тан.

Осложнения сюжетов и разнообразие полихромии имело место в период Юань, тогда как в период Мин (XIV в.) формируется определенный эталон фресковых

росписей и декора религиозного и светского характера, сконцентрированно воплощены в ансамбле императорского дворца Гугун).

В период правления династии Мин сохраняется консервативность государственного устройства, а в культуре и искусстве сохраняются сложившиеся традиции предыдущих периодов, обогащаются и развиваются. Это отразилось также и на архитектуре, которая зависела от социальной иерархии, влияло на типы сооружений различного функционального назначения, их планирование, размеры и декор.

Характерные особенности архитектуры периода Мин: масштабные градостроительные дворцовые, храмовые парковые ансамбли, усыпальницы императоров, ирригационные сооружения.

Ключевые слова: региональные особенности, дворец Гугун, династия Мин, традиционная китайская архитектура, декор, символическое значение, культурные традиции, цвета.

Анотація

Чан Пен. Національна своєрідність і декоративне оздоблення в імператорському (huang da) палаці Гугун в Пекіні. В статті визначено історичні передумови, містобудівне значення, принципи побудови об'ємно-просторової композиції, особливості декорування найбільшого палацового ансамблю світу – Гугун в Китаї, розбудова якого тривала впродовж періодів Мін і Цин. Проаналізовано символіку декоративних елементів і поліхромії. Наведено основні поняття, які характеризують традиційну китайську архітектуру.

В китайській архітектурі і творах мистецтва особлива роль відводилась символічному декору і поліхромії, яка також відзначалась певним символічним змістом.

Порівняльний аналіз поліхромії предметів побуту, творів мистецтва і архіте-

ктури свідчить про домінування відкритих кольорів і простих зображень в давні часи і поступове урізноманітнення композицій і поліхромії починаючи з династій Сун і Тан.

Ускладнення сюжетів і урізноманітнення поліхромії мало місце в період Юань, тоді як в період Мін (XIV ст.) формується певний еталон фрескових розписів і декору релігійного і світського характеру, що сконцентровано втілено в ансамблі імператорського палацу Гугун).

В період правління династії Мін зберігається консервативність державного устрою, а в культурі і мистецтві зберігаються усталені традиції попередніх періодів, які збагачуються і розвиваються. Це позначилось також і на архітектурі, яка залежала від соціальної ієрархії, що впливало на типи споруд різного функціонального призначення, їх планування, розміри і декор.

Характерні особливості архітектури періоду Мін: масштабні містобудівні палацові, храмові і паркові ансамблі, усипальні імператорів, ірригаційні споруди.

Пурпурове Заборонене місто (Цзицзін'ючен) (тепер – Гугун) – головний палацовий ансамбль китайських 24 імператорів династій Мін і Цин (з 1421 до 1912 року) є найбільшим палацовим ансамблем в світі розміром 961 x 753 метрів, загальною площею 720 тис. м², яке складається з 980 будівель. Цей ансамбль справив значний вплив на культурний і архітектурний розвиток всієї Східної Азії. В 1987 році він першим з китайських пам'яток був внесений до списку всесвітньої спадщини ЮНЕСКО і включений ЮНЕСКО в перелік найбільших світових зібрань автентичних дерев'яних споруд.

Ключові слова: регіональні особливості, палац Гугун, династия Мін, традиційна китайська архітектура, декор, символічне значення, культурні традиції, кольори

Стаття надійшла до редакцію 17.06.2019 р.

Стаття прийнята до друку 12.09.2019 р.