

Original Article

## The Application of Totem Culture Elements in the Design of Jin Opera Cultural and Creative Products

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**Abstract:** Jin opera is one of the well-known local operas in China, commonly known as Shanxi opera. It is also known as Zhongluo opera because it originated in central Shanxi. Jin opera has a long history of culture, and its costumes and patterns are unique visual elements of totem culture. It is to promote the culture of Jin opera and to integrate and develop the culture of Jin opera into public life. Based on the four principles of practicality, emotionality, formal beauty, and artistry of Jin opera, cultural and creative products were proposed by Jin opera scholar Ren Nanan as the design concept to analyze and reorganize the colors and patterns of Jin opera costumes. By analyzing and applying the design principles and concepts of Jin opera costume culture, we analyze the design and feasibility of cultural and creative products of Jin opera culture from three aspects: color, pattern, and program rules, and provide ideas and concepts for the design of cultural and creative products of Jin opera culture, so that its culture can be accepted and loved by young people. Jin opera is one of the most precious traditional arts in China. With the emphasis on cultural inheritance, the role of cultural and creative design is receiving increasing attention, and the artistic and creative design incorporating visual elements of Jin Opera will become increasingly sophisticated.

**Keywords:** Totem culture; Jin opera; Design; Cultural; Creative product.



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### 1. Introduction

The Jin opera is mainly popular in the central and northern parts of Shanxi and parts of Inner Mongolia and Shaanxi. The regional language influences it and has a strong local atmosphere (Liuyuan, 2016). The face patterns and the various ornaments of the costumes in Jin opera are not only visual elements of Jin opera culture but also the symbolic language of our unique totemic culture (Brandon & Banham, 1997; W. Li, 2021; Tomasic, 2023). The design principles of Jin Opera's cultural and creative products contain practical design concepts for life, emotional design strategies based on consumer demand, the law of formal beauty that highlights aesthetic value, and artistic symbol construction inheriting cultural connotations (Han & Zhang, 2023; Keane, 2013) with the design of the Jin Opera cultural and creative products as the center. This innovation is hoped to promote the better continuation and development of Jin Opera culture in the new era. Few totem culture designs are applied as visual elements of the Jin Opera costumes. However, with increasing attention paid by the Chinese government to the culture of Jin Opera and the continuous

development of cultural and creative industries, the artistic and creative design incorporating visual elements of Jin Opera will become more and more sophisticated, the culture of Jin Opera will be endowed with the new significance of the times, and the application of visual elements of Jin Opera in the design of cultural and creative products will be continuously promoted.

## 2. Cultural Connotation of Visual Elements of Jin Opera

### 2.1. visual elements of cultural and creative products of Jin opera

Visual elements are the basic units that make up a visual object, a form of language for visual communication, and consist of two main parts: information elements and formal elements, like graphics, color, space, etc. (Hao-Nan & Mei-Chen, 2020). People's appreciation of Jin opera comes mostly from the sense of hearing. Still, Jin opera also has a strong visual impact, and its costumes are bright and colorful with many iconic patterns. The design of costumes in Jin opera is the basis for the audience's understanding of Jin opera, and the costume styles, patterns, and color elements of the characters' faces convey the cultural characteristics of Jin opera and the characteristics of local Opera (Party, 2020). The female face of Jin opera, Wu Lizhen, has a black, white, and red face and distinctive black and gold clothes in "Ming Gong Jie," highlighting the character's image. The face painting of Jin opera is a kind of make-up unique to the Jinzhong region's local culture. It uses colors to mark the characters according to their different identities and personalities, good and bad. After hundreds of years of development, the face painting of Jin opera has formed a certain pattern, which is loved by people and has become an important symbol of traditional culture in the Shanxi region.

The visual elements of Jin opera can be divided into two main aspects: color and pattern. The colors of Jin opera are mainly derived from the colors of the faces and costumes. Jin opera face painting is mostly realistic and symbolic, with simple but artistic shapes. Jin opera face painting differs from other theatrical face paintings in that it is more rustic and intuitive to understand, both in terms of make-up and presentation, and incorporates Shanxi's local characteristics and customs. Opera costume is an artistic way to shape the external image of a character, an effective means to portray the character and complement the actor's performance, and its value is mainly reflected in packaging theatrical characters. Opera costume is an artistic way to shape the external image of a character, an effective means to portray the character and complement the performance of the actor, and its value is mainly reflected in packaging the dramatic characters. The formation of Jin opera costumes is also subordinate to the rules and regulations of Chinese theater dressing. It is closely related to the rules and regulations of traditional Chinese costumes. Secondly, as far as patterns are concerned, "a picture must be intentional and auspicious"(Party, 2020). The various patterns and decorations of the costumes in Jin opera are visual elements of Jin opera culture and symbolic languages of our unique totem culture (Li, 2020). The extraction and application of the key patterns and decorations to various cultural and creative products are important for the inheritance and development of Jin opera in cultural and creative products. It is of great significance for the inheritance and development of the intangible culture of Jin opera.

### 2.2. Design Principles of Cultural and Creative Products of Jin Opera

This paper adopts a qualitative research method to collect and analyze information on Jin opera costumes through literature reading, document finding, and field research. According to Qi (2022), the design principles of cultural and creative products can be generally divided into four parts (see Figure 1)

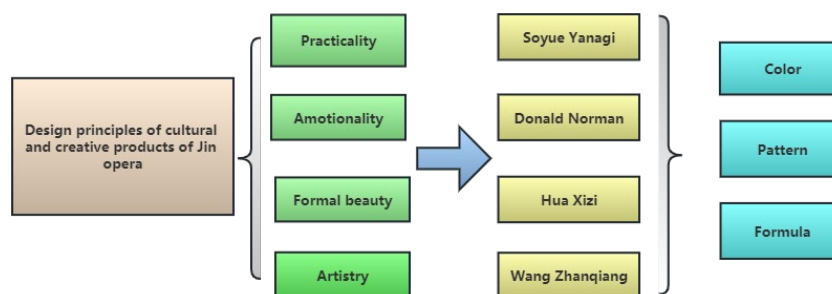


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The first part is the practical design concept for life. A good design must be a practical design that puts people first. In his book "The Way of Craft," the famous Japanese folk-art theorist and aesthete Soyue Yanagi argues that "the only way to produce beauty is using artifacts" (South-South, 2022). From this, practicality is the core element of design. Cultural creativity and a practical career are essential for cultural and creative products. Cultural creativity is the external manifestation of the artistic aesthetics of cultural and creative products, while for the practical career, it is the primary factor in attracting consumers to buy. To convey their inner spirit, cultural and creative products must rely on practical materiality and deepen their cultural connotation (Chen, 2022). As in Figure 2, the pattern of the cloud shoulder of the traditional costume of Jin opera can be extracted and used in the cameo design of furniture or cosmetics.

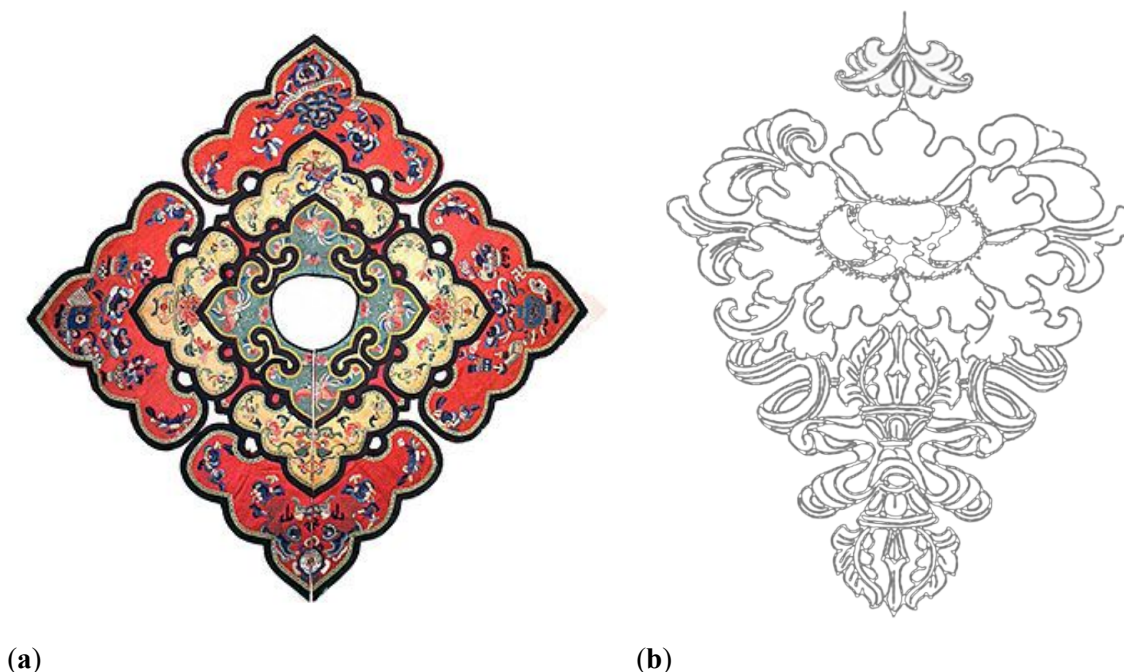


Figure 2. Cloud shoulder and its pattern

The second part is the emotional design strategy based on consumer demand. A real design must have a passion, and the source of this temperature is emotion. Donald Norman fully developed the emotional design in his book "Emotional Design. Emotion is the unique nature of human beings and the bond that society constantly follows. For example, the Pinterest website automatically switches themes, such as gardening skills and outfit matching, on the pages that lead users to register and log in. It carefully selects images in the same shade under each theme to entice users to register for the site with high-quality visuals. The emotion of cultural and creative products can be closely related to fashion trends, tightly linked to tradition or a combination of the two. In short, it can communicate and dialogue with the user emotionally. For instance, the Forbidden City cat theme branding in the reconstruction of the image of the emperor and the cat, with the internationally popular color scheme, designed into the IP image, and then the IP image as the creative content of the doll, stationery, cell phone cases, and so on.

What is needed in the design of cultural and industrial products nowadays is a win-win market effect of cultural and industrial values, and it has become urgent to design cultural and creative products with more spiritual power and emotional temperature. The third part highlights the design principles of aesthetic value. The law of formal beauty is the rule that human beings summarize how to embody beauty, a summary of experience in artistic creation, such as the Hua Xizi make-up design in many traditional Chinese patterns of a cameo as an innovative embodiment of its design aesthetic and artistic value. The fourth part is the artistic design principle of inheriting cultural connotations. This concept was first presented and actively advocated by Mr. Wang Zhanqiang in February 2008. The content of artistic symbols is concentrated on the symbols themselves while leaving some space for the audience's imagination, and the expression is more straightforward yet more diversified. For example, suppose a product is designed using Jin opera culture as the theme. In that case, it should highlight the core content, condense traditional culture into symbolic elements, discard irrelevant content outside the essence, and be more cultural.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The Use of Color Elements of Jin Opera in the Design of Creative Products

The color elements in Jin opera culture are relatively single. Both the faces and costumes, in general, are mostly based on a large area of base color and then a combination of small other colors, giving a fresh and vivid visual experience. As shown in Figure 1, this is a book designed based on traditional characters. The pattern part is a re-extraction and generalization of the characteristics of characters with different identities in Jin opera, which retains the original symbolic language of Jin opera characters without losing the unique flavor of modern design. In terms of color, they are all drawn with green, red, and other colors, and the use of black and blue accents, along with the large area of red and green colors, enhances the artistic impact of the picture. In Jin opera, the red color is blended with vermilion and white with black and white, leaving the traditional color techniques of Jin opera without lacking modern trends. And orange, blue, purple, and pink are common colors in Jin opera costumes. These traditional costume colors have a high saturation, and with red and green, the color ratios are also more coordinated, which are the more popular hues in recent years. The design is simple and generous but does not lose the traditional cultural heritage and connotation.



Figure 3. Color-based cultural and creative products

#### 3.2. The Use of Jin Opera Pattern Elements in the Design of Creative Products

Most of the pattern elements in Jin opera are animal and plant, such as dragons, phoenixes, pythons, unicorns, birds, etc., and plant ornaments, such as plums, orchids, bamboo, chrysanthemums, peonies, etc. (Wang, 2016). Each Jin opera costume is an eye-catching work of art, from the colors used to the costume ornaments, which makes us feel the artistic attainments of our ancestors. In order to give new life to the traditional ornaments and make them more attractive, the traditional face pattern of Jin Opera has been realistically designed.



Figure 4. Umbrella design based on the Bao Gong pattern

Figure 4 is a redesign of the traditional character ornament, which differs from the traditional character pattern in that the design of the body and costume has been weakened, the detail of the face has been enhanced to have a more decorative effect, and ink painting has been added as an embellishment to show the vivid butterfly image of the Bao Gong character. The whole scene is arranged in a regular circle, expressing the philosophical idea of the unity of heaven and man and conveying traditional Chinese cultural concepts.

### 3.3. The Application of the Rule of Formula in the Design of Creative Products

For cultural and creative product design, the core elements of the prototype are extracted from the prototype and implanted in the new design, which is the embodiment of the formula. Huang (2013) proposed that Opera is the performance of a story by song and dance. However, chanting the story is not by song and dance; it is non-theater. Although it is a song and dance, it is not an acting story. Also, it is not Opera." Some opera artifacts can be found in the Peek, Song, and Jin miscellaneous drama in the "orphan" (playing the role of officials) costumes for "show feet Pu head, round collar robe," hand holding Ru board. These costumes are generalized and are the concentrated embodiment of the programmed design (Yanlin, 2016). As shown in Figure 3, the design is a complete representation of the character of Fan Lihua in the play "Three Invitations to Fan Lihua," from the headdress and make-up to the costume, all complete and systematic preservation of the character prototype of Fan Lihua. From the perspective of props, weapons, and flags are Fan Lihua's belongings, which are also successfully designed into cultural and creative products. As a LEGO figure, Qing Yi has the distinctive characteristics of traditional drama characters and the cute style of the modern version of a cartoon shape.

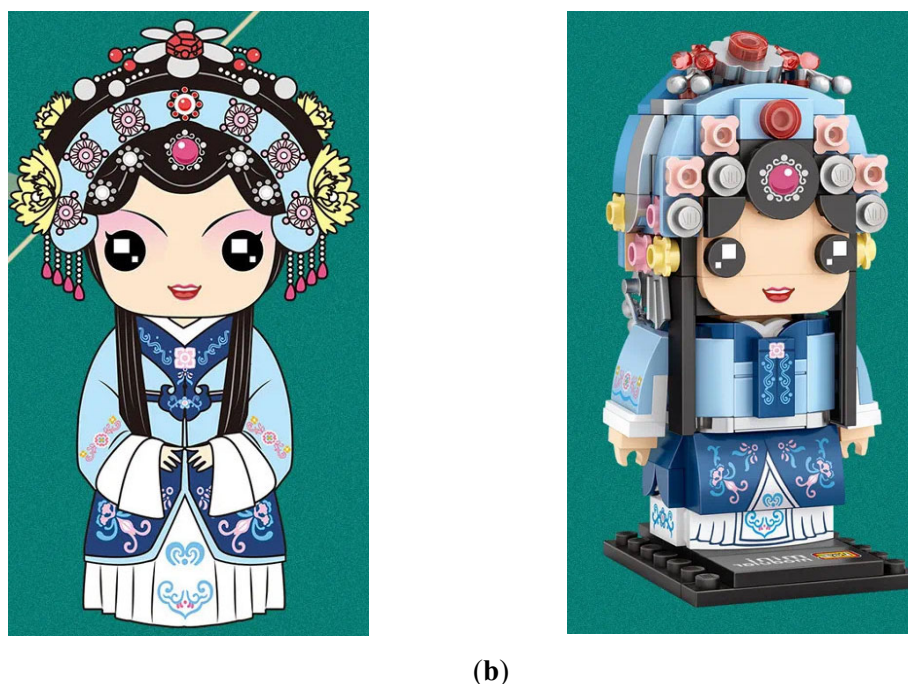


Figure 5. Qing Yi's Lego character design

In order to promote and develop the culture of Jin opera, we should actively participate in the design of creative products based on the culture of Jin opera, which is conducive to the understanding of the culture of Jin opera by young people and can also help the traditional culture to be inherited through innovation (Yanlin, 2016).

## 4. Conclusions

The traditional Jin opera faces and costumes have bright and unique colors and delicate decorations, giving people a beautiful visual enjoyment. Integrating these elements into the design of cultural and creative products enhances the visual effect of cultural and creative products. It facilitates contemporary young people's awareness and understanding of traditional culture. At the same time, good design also attaches

importance to the complete embodiment of the design reference prototype, which requires us to master the culture of Jin opera and know its essence, but also to innovate on the basis of traditional culture and to promote the continuation and development of Jin opera culture in the new era under the premise of innovation. At present, there are still few designs that apply visual elements of Jin opera in cultural and creative products, but with the increasing attention of the state to Jin opera culture and the continuous development of the cultural and creative industry, creative designs that integrate visual elements of Jin opera will become more and more refined. Jin opera culture will be given a new meaning in the changing age.

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