

Innovative Designs Inspired by Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs

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Abstract: This study focuses on Han Dynasty stone relief patterns as the core research object, exploring modern innovative design paths through their integration with traditional Chinese patterns. As a key cultural carrier of the Han Dynasty, stone reliefs encapsulate rich historical and cultural information, while traditional Chinese patterns are characterized by distinct structural order. Integrating these two elements and expressing them via contemporary visual forms provides valuable insights for cultural inheritance, artistic innovation, and the integration of traditional culture with modern life. Innovatively reinterpreting Han stone relief patterns in combination with contemporary design concepts can effectively promote the inheritance and dissemination of traditional culture and meet contemporary users' diverse demands for cultural and creative products.

Keywords: Han Dynasty stone relief patterns; Infographics; Traditional Chinese motifs; Cultural and creative design

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1. Research analysis

1.1. Research background

With the rapid development of the cultural and creative industry in China, there is a growing emphasis on the “living inheritance” of intangible cultural heritage. Han Dynasty stone reliefs, as a prominent form of plastic art, are rich in pictorial symbols and cultural connotations^[1]. They reflect the social life, religious beliefs, and aesthetic pursuits of the Han Dynasty, serving as a visual encyclopedia of that era. However, current research on Han stone reliefs tends to focus on historical archaeology and art history interpretation, while their integration into modern visual design and cultural and creative product development remains relatively under-explored^[2]. This study aims to bridge this gap by reinterpreting Han stone relief patterns through the framework of traditional Chinese patterns, adapting them to contemporary aesthetic needs and application scenarios, thereby enhancing the cultural vitality of ancient heritage.

1.2. Research status

Domestic and international research on Han stone relief patterns has yielded fruitful results, particularly in the interpretation of their historical and cultural value. Scholars such as Zhang Congjun (2024) have conducted in-depth studies on the cultural connotations embedded in Han stone reliefs, providing a solid theoretical foundation for this research ^[3]. In the field of modern design application, research on the integration of traditional cultural elements has intensified. For instance, Wang Li (2023) explored the contemporary activation of traditional patterns in cultural and creative design, offering practical methodologies for this study ^[4]. Li Na (2022) further analyzed the aesthetic implications of traditional Chinese patterns and their innovative application in modern visual design, which directly informs the design logic of this paper ^[5]. However, most existing studies either emphasize formal imitation or focus on a single cultural element, lacking a systematic approach that integrates the narrative structure of Han reliefs with the compositional order of traditional Chinese patterns. This research gap highlights the necessity and innovation of the present study.

1.3. Research objectives and significance

1.3.1. Research objectives

The core objective of this study is to innovate the design of Han stone relief patterns by systematically integrating them with traditional Chinese patterns. Through element extraction, narrative reconstruction, and color innovation, the study aims to transform ancient pictorial themes into modern visual infographics and derivative products, thereby meeting the market demand for culturally distinctive and aesthetically valuable designs ^[6].

1.3.2. Significance

Cultural Significance: This research excavates and revitalizes the artistic essence of Han stone reliefs, promoting the dissemination of Han culture in modern society ^[7]. It aligns with national strategies for the protection and inheritance of excellent traditional culture.

Practical Significance: By exploring the design methods and application pathways of Han stone relief patterns, this study provides actionable references for designers and cultural enterprises, enhancing the added value and market competitiveness of cultural and creative products ^[8].

2. Design methods and process

2.1. Pattern design research

This study clarifies the target audience and design principles through literature review and market research. Based on the research by Li Ming and Zhang Wei (2022) on the contemporary application of traditional Chinese patterns, the design adheres to the principles of “integration of tradition and modernity” and “aesthetic harmony” ^[9]. The current market situation reveals that designs combining traditional elements often suffer from homogeneity ^[5]. Therefore, this study seeks to create a unique visual language by extracting core elements from Han stone reliefs and reinterpreting them within the framework of traditional patterns such as Baoxianghua (treasure flower) and lotus patterns.

2.2. Design methods

2.2.1. Element extraction method

This method involves abstracting and reconstructing classic motifs from Han stone reliefs, such as music and dance scenes, sacred trees, and martial arts competitions ^[2]. These elements are then combined with the

rhythmic order of traditional Chinese patterns to create infographic-style designs. In terms of color, the study draws on the research by Wu Wei (2024) on the translation of traditional symbols in cultural and creative product design, adopting a color scheme that balances the rustic texture of stone reliefs with the vivid hues of traditional New Year paintings^[8].

2.2.2. Narrative method

This method constructs visual narratives based on the historical stories and legends depicted in Han stone reliefs. By weaving these narratives into the structural framework of traditional patterns, the design connects ancient scenes with contemporary life scenarios, as demonstrated in the research by Zhao Xin (2023) on the social life connotations in Han Dynasty paintings^[7]. For example, the design “Landing Successfully” links the Han pursuit of success with the aspirations of modern youth, establishing an emotional connection.

2.3. Design process

2.3.1. Information interpretation

Han stone relief patterns are transformed into infographic expressions and integrated with traditional New Year painting color systems. This process explores the spiritual connotations of both and incorporates modern life elements, following the aesthetic principles outlined in Liu Fang’s (2022) research on the aesthetic connotations of traditional Chinese patterns^[10].

2.3.2. Motif innovation

Representative elements of Han stone reliefs are selected and integrated into the structural framework of traditional Chinese patterns, such as the cross-shaped, plum blossom-shaped, and circular radial structures. The color selection adheres to the cultural philosophy of “harmony between heaven and humanity” and the latest research on traditional pattern aesthetics^[10].

2.3.3. Pattern design

The design is developed from three dimensions: entertainment, spirituality, and competition. The layout and color are determined based on the characteristics of different carriers, achieving a balance between visual contrast and harmony, as guided by the research on the integration of traditional crafts and modern design (Figure 1)^[11].



Figure 1. Information chart design of Chinese portrait stone (Author-created)

2.3.4. Extension design

A series of cultural and creative products is designed, including stationery, daily necessities, accessories, and home decorations, to expand the application scenarios. The design principles and methodologies follow the latest research trends in cultural and creative product integration (Figure 2) [6].

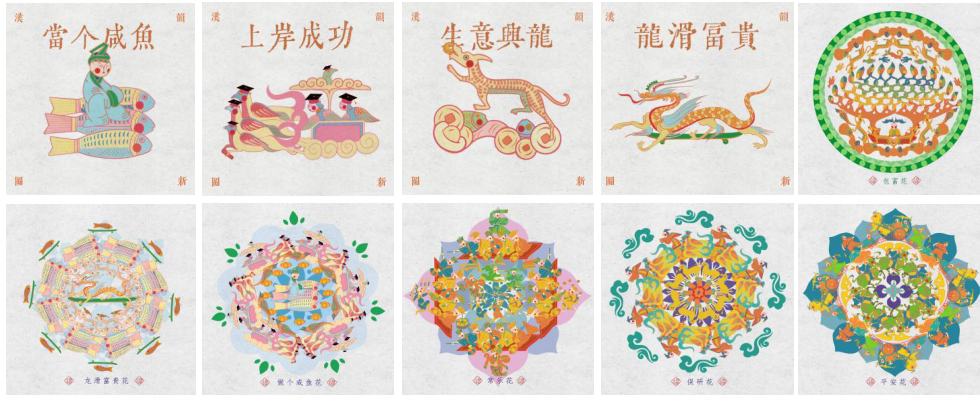


Figure 2. Innovation and extension design of Chinese portrait stone (Author-created)

3. Design presentation and interpretation

3.1. Design presentation

The design, themed “Han Rhythm, Modern Innovation”, targets young people, traditional culture lovers, and international audiences. It combines auspicious decorative elements with representative motifs of Han stone reliefs, achieving a harmonious composition that unifies visual appeal and cultural depth, as validated by the research in (Figure 3) [1, 3].



Figure 3. Innovation and extension design of Chinese portrait stone (Author-created)

3.2. Design concept

The project integrates Han stone relief patterns, the orderly structure of traditional Chinese motifs, and New Year painting colors. It explores the resonance between Han cultural concepts and modern life, possessing values of cultural inheritance, ecological harmony, and healthy lifestyle guidance [2, 4].

4. Design summary and outlook

4.1. Design summary

The “Han Rhythm, Modern Innovation” design adheres to the principle of “preserving authenticity while

innovating.” It integrates modern design concepts with the cultural roots of Han stone reliefs, realizing the fusion of tradition and modernity. However, further research is needed to deepen the integration of traditional culture with diverse design styles ^[12].

4.2 Design outlook

Future research should focus on digitalization, diversification, and internationalization. Integrating modern digital technologies (e.g., AI, digital exhibitions) can improve dissemination efficiency ^[4]. Expanding design expressions to sculpture, digital media, and architecture will broaden its influence ^[2].

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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