

# Research on the Design of Talisman Cultural Products from the Perspective of Semiotics

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## ABSTRACT

By studying the complex visual structure of the Talisman culture, extracting and analyzing the distinctive symbols in the visual structure on the basis of semiotics, and deducing the special symbols that can be used, lay a foundation for the inheritance and development of the Talisman culture. Based on the analysis and understanding of the origin and evolution stage of the talisman culture, the five components of talisman head, talisman spirit, talisman belly, talisman bravery and talisman foot were decomposed and analyzed to transform the talisman into a visual language. A questionnaire survey is used to collect the public's interest and preference for the Talisman culture and creative products, so as to determine the final output plan of cultural and creative product design. Through visual structure analysis, special symbols that can accurately represent the five talisman elements are extracted, which serve as the basis of the design. Finally, the design direction is the calendar cultural and creative products with the Talisman culture characteristics, and the modernized Talisman graphic is applied to the design of the creative calendar, increasing its cultural connotation, inheriting the traditional culture, broadening the design form of cultural and creative products.

**Keywords:** *the Talisman culture, visual sense, symbol, semiotics*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a special language symbol with positive psychological implication, the Talisman is derived from the ancient sorcery symbol, which should be used as an important visual carrier to inherit and develop traditional Chinese culture. Throughout the past five thousand years, China has numerous branches of traditional culture, and each branch is worthy of inheritance and renewal. After thousands of years of cleansing and evolution, the Talisman culture, as a special visual image, has already possessed a complete system and structure, as well as strong communication and psychological implication, and is a highlight of Chinese religious image culture and art.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This research takes the origin, function and value of the Talisman as the theoretical research foundation, and discusses the value of the Talisman's existence and the design form that can be applied to the design of

cultural and creative from the theoretical aspect.

### 2.1. The origin of the Talisman

The talisman culture originates from sorcery. Sorcery is a kind of worship of natural power in early human beings, which appeared in the middle and late period of primitive society. Totem worship can be said to be the most influential part of the talisman culture. The Talisman is the true writing of ancient people as well as the true writing between the heaven and the earth. It is a means of communicating with god and introducing external forces for creation by virtue of the drawing and writing ability. In the eyes of the monk, the Talisman is the movement track of the creation of heaven and earth, the information of Yin and Yang, and the holographic projection of the unity of heaven and man and the marvelous agreement between the two. To ordinary humans, the Talisman is the carrier of reverence for nature and full of its own aspirations. But in any case, the core of its most fundamental idea, is the pictographic sense of truth, with essence.

### 2.2. The function of the Talisman

Taking the Talisman of Fujian Province and Taiwan as an example, the Talisman types widely popular among the local people include five resplendent symbols, five ghost symbols, townhouse symbols, peace symbols, placental symbols, birth symbols, and moon symbols (see Fig. 1). Its main function can banish evil spirits, dispel disease, suppress evil and protect safety. The Talisman has a wide range of uses, including as a cure for humans; or Dan book Talisman in paper, after burning dissolved in water after the patient due to; or the symbol could be sealed and worn by the patient. They are used to exorcise ghost town evil; or on the body, or on the door. Those used for disaster relief; or the Talisman should be thrown into the dam to stop the flood, or the book should be called to contact the drought, etc. [1].

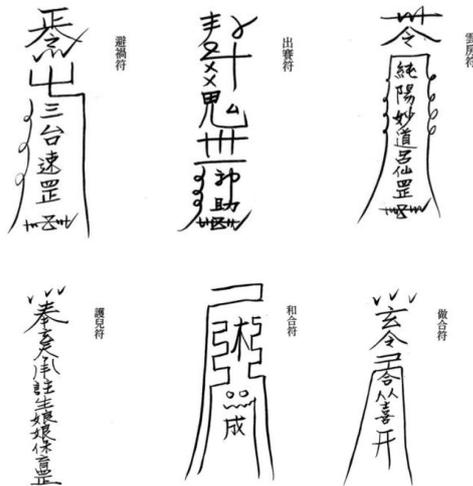


Figure 1 Folk ofuda

### 2.3. The value of the Talisman

As the most representative visual symbol of Taoist culture, the Talisman image has been inherited to modern times in a positive way. The emergence of social contradictions promoted the development of Taoist culture at that time, and the Talisman image came into being. Although these contradictions could not be solved in the overall situation, it promoted the emergence of the powerful humanistic care function of the Talisman figure [2]. The Talisman belongs to the category of religious culture, but its historical and cultural heritage of thousands of years should not be ignored. In addition to the Taoist culture associated with the talisman, it is worth mentioning that the talisman embodies profound aesthetic and cultural values and plays a positive role in the suggestive behavior of human psychology.

## 3. COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE OF THE TALISMAN IMAGE

Talisman image, a traditional cultural and historical heritage, is analyzed as the object of visual structure, and the appropriate symbolic figure for design can be summarized by analyzing, decomposing and transforming the visual language of the Talisman image.

### 3.1. Analysis of the overall structure of the Talisman

After a long history of evolution, the visual characteristics of the talisman images are constantly innovating. The structure of the Talisman is mainly the top and bottom structure. The left-right structure and other structures are rare in the collection of historical classics. The Talisman images in our daily life and people's impressions are generally in long and narrow forms (see Fig. 2), such as "The graphic symbols connected under the edict text in "ZhentuShafu" are long lines of equal length (see Fig. 3). At the same time, the writing strokes on the Talisman are similar to those of Gu Kaizhi, one of the three masters of the Eastern Jin and Six Dynasties, "Spring clouds floating in the sky, running water." describes this brushstroke perfectly.

The overall structure of the talisman is composed of five main parts: the head, the master, the belly, the gallbladder and the foot. The top of the symbol head is the most striking and also of relative importance. It appears on the top of the figure as a leader. It can be composed of three hooked shapes, or it can be edict or lei Ling as the symbol head. The god part corresponds to the function of each talisman, and the characters are different for different functions. The function of the abdomen is mainly a functional component, which reflects the function and efficacy of the abdomen and where it needs to be used. The composition of the abdomen is also replaced by secret characters, compound characters or graphics. The gallbladder is the most powerful part of the talisman. Whether the talisman can be effective or not depends on its efficacy, so it is nicknamed "into the Talisman". Among all the talisman images, the talisman should be paid the most attention, just as the talisman is regarded as an important organ [3]. Common signs of boldness include the words "Gang" and "Jing", as well as the words "Ma" and "Hua". As the end part of a symbol, it has many forms of ending completion and image expression, and requires the master's own modification to add some intentions to this symbol. In painting, it also needs to match the corresponding formula, which provides a lot of graphic materials for the design.



Figure 2 Town soil evil spirit

### 3.2. The visual structure decomposition of the Talisman

#### 3.2.1 Analysis of the visual structure of the head of the Talisman

There are three types of common headers: three clear headers, three general headers and three set headers (see Figure 4). The figure of Sanqing Talisman head itself conveys a form of getting someone monkey up, alluding to the spirit of man, the sun, the moon and the stars of heaven, the water, wind and fire of earth; Three will symbol head table stars, star jun meaning; The three talisman head are three stars, also known as city god, land and ancestor teacher, and the three stars in the talisman are the three stars, namely, Qusheng Si Lu march, Xujing KaiDe Star and Six ChunSi Xing Jun [4]. In addition to the common symbol heads, the command symbol heads also have a high occurrence rate in the Talisman image. Here are six common ways to draw edict (see Figure 5).

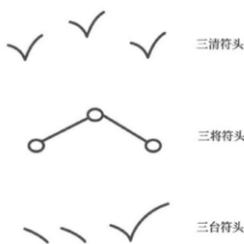


Figure 4 Talisman head structure



Figure 5 Edict

#### 3.2.2 Analysis of the visual structure of symbols and bravery

Common visual structures of talisman foot are as follows (see Figure 6), and the drawing forms of these foot it is not hard to see in related runes. The runes contain three elements: Five thunder, sun and moon, and twelve star king, among which twelve star King is the first four of the twelve earthly branches. The runes are

mostly used to pray for good fortune and ward off evil [5].

The common bold part of the symbol is superimpose on the symbol foot, which implies the firm strength of the symbol and the preservation of its secret. Commonly referred to as "Gang", "Well", "Car" and "wealth", the list is endless (see Figure 7).

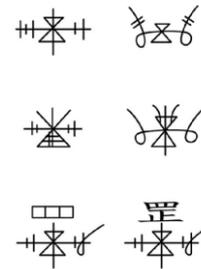


Figure 6 TALISMAN FOOT

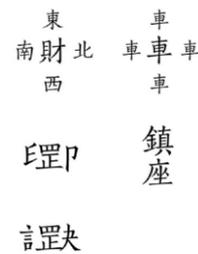


Figure 7 TALISMAN BRAVERY

#### 3.2.3 A study on the meaning behind the visual structure of the Talisman symbol

From the point of view of semiotics, the Talisman is a characteristic form of symbols and images. No matter from symbol, association to symbol and convention, they are all in the same line and carry the intentional implication. The symbolic convention is the foundation of longitudinal association. This is the collective association of contracts existing on the basis of human common culture. Symbols are often accompanied by various social activities of human beings and human society and culture can be displayed and continued by means of the existence of symbols. The primitive people's communication and worship with the gods was constructed with the help of symbols, the basic symbol.

In today's society, human beings are ready to enter the rapid development of the digital era. While the Internet and computer language are prevalent, symbolic language has not disappeared [6]. In the long tunnel of time, symbolic symbols such as China's eight-diagram-shaped appetizer and Egypt's Pyramid still shone and released their exclusive energy and exerted a significant impact on human culture. The Talisman symbol is a force that cannot be ignored.

#### 4. THE TALISMAN DESIGN AND APPLICATION OF CREATIVE PRODUCTS

The Talisman image provides diversified design materials and graphic styles for designers and contributes brand-new design forms and styles for inheriting and developing traditional Chinese culture[7]. The Talisman can reflect not only the epitome of China's five thousand years of history, but also the wisdom of ancient people in creating these images.

##### 4.1. Application of Talisman image in design

##### 4.1.1 Case study on the Design of the "Talisman Reconstruction" of the visual structure of symbols and bravery

Designer "Talisman Reconstruction" theme design is rooted in The Complete Catalogue of Chenzhou Charms states in theory and then books as design carrier main form, printing carrier for secondary form will present the, the Talisman symbol to design and innovation of reconstruction, eventually to classic books shaft roll novel design form (see Figure 8).The most eye-catching feature of this design product is that it overthrows the old form of book design and binding design, and independently developed a unique book binding design form, splitting all expression elements and design content into two parts.The first part is composed of the attention points in painting and the text information about the Talisman in the form of folding and fitting, aiming to innovate the design form and make it easy for the audience to read. The second part is composed of four categories: repression, praying, calling and healing, and adopts novel dragon scale design to meet the audience's search and query needs.



Figure 8 Classic Book Design

The designer also drew a series of the Talisman illustrations that link the entire scroll to make it more coherent and pleasing to the eyes (See Figure 9). Reflecting the traditional cultural form of books, the book has been innovated and transformed, which not only explained relevant cultural information of the Talisman with the text content, but also added aesthetic

interest and modern sense with the form of illustration, thus attracting the attention of the public and arousing the emotional resonance of the audience.



Figure 9 "Talisman Reconstruction" Illustration series

The designer adopted the positive psychological implication of the Talisman symbol as the design of surrounding cultural and creative products, such as relevant posters and cards (see Figure 10). The poster design in the 'Talisman Reconstruction' abstracts the specific talisman symbol as the main body of the poster in the left-center position of the painting, and the corresponding text with positive psychological implication such as 'Peace all year round'. The two proposals have their own unique features. The first poster schemes to blue mass-tone Talisman adorned the red dot on subject content and copywriting are red made reasonable echo, increased the poster design of the whole, color jumping and reasonable collocation, give a person strong visual impact, and can make people see that has got positive theme series posters Talisman colour. The hierarchical relationship between the subject and the English copy, Chinese copy, time and place information is clear, which can make the audience's eyes transfer from the first level of information to the second level information and so on, so as to achieve the original intention of the designer. The difference between the second scheme and the first scheme mainly lies in the main color and the composition of the main characters. The Talisman with black as the main color is better in terms of reduction, with novel text arrangement and positive psychological implication. Generally speaking, the two Talisman poster designs can give people a strong visual impact and positive psychological suggestion, making full use of the image attribute and inherent valuable spiritual core of the Talisman, achieving a true sense of hieroglyphics and reflecting the meaning with pictures.



Figure 10 Poster Series Design

Starting from the first poster solution, designers also extended to prayer, rid disaster, seek and illnesses four series posters design theme (see Figure 11), respectively adopted different form of Talisman image design, copywriting for "happiness peace", "all right", "maxim", and "longevity and health" this kind of idioms with blessing meaning dispersion around the wish graphics, it creates a mystical mood[8]. In this series of works, the Talisman image, as a graphic symbol element, is further rendered with its formal aesthetic feeling, and its abstract calligraphic figure of curl, as the main object, is highly appealing and visually striking.



Figure 11 Poster Series Design

#### 4.1.2 Case analysis of sending "magic figures" in 2021 Spring Festival

The Qingsong Fund, which is the party to the Product design project, is an early and mature venture capital institution. As one of the leading early stage investment institutions in China, Qingsong Fund and its partners have been ranked top 10 early stage investment institutions/investors for many times.

The designer starts with four concepts of preventing aging, becoming beautiful, preventing peeling and not losing weight, aiming to promote a series of skin care products and cosmetics such as new moisturizing lotion, cleansing lotion, essence and toner of Home Facial Pro, an original skin care brand invested by Qingsong Fund. It also includes a range of fitness products from original sportswear brand Doot. The designer started with four different forms of masters in the form of illustration to better reflect the products involved in the four aspects. The illustration image was taken as the master image of the Talisman (see Figure 12 and 13), accompanied by the copy of "Green Pine 2020, Youth 2020", which shows the overall design of the Talisman literary creation product in the form of design image. The combination of illustration and talisman is quite new, which changes the traditional style of talisman and greatly improves its design form. As a commercial advertising and cultural creation product, talisman takes advantage of its strong psychological implication and perfectly demonstrates the rationality and modernity of talisman design.



Figure 12 Series illustration



Figure 13 Series cultural creation

#### 4.2. My cultural and creative product design practice——"2021 New Symbol Calendar"

Based on the detailed and in-depth understanding and study of traditional Chinese culture, it can be found that the existence form of the Talisman image can give positive psychological suggestion to people, and thus better inherit the spiritual core of Taoist culture. From the point of view of design, the symbolized form perfectly integrates belief and figure, and the application of the visual image of the talisman into concrete design practice can not only enrich the design but also increase its contagiveness[9]. Based on the above analysis of the visual image of the Talisman and case studies, I will use its unique symbolic elements to promote and develop the spirit of traditional Chinese culture.

The design form of my talisman creation product takes the calendar as the main expression, and is named as the New talisman calendar homophonic happy calendar. The talisman text plus the talisman symbol is the unique visual symbol and the design method of divergent composition, which gives a strong positive psychological suggestion. In terms of color, the warm Chinese red can highlight the connotation of traditional Chinese culture, and the symbolic elements are added in the form of illustration to echo the talisman symbol, strengthening the strong atmosphere of the integration of modernity and tradition in the calendar as a whole (see Figure 14 and 15).



Figure 14 "2021 New Symbol Calendar"



Figure 15 Exhibition of scene

## 5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Dialectical materialism holds that everything repeats itself in the process of development. After problems are discovered and solved, they can always develop again in a specific direction, which is called "spiral" development[10]. The development of the Talisman culture has the characteristics of this development. When inheriting the cultural heritage left by the ancients, the essence of the talisman culture has been continuously applied in our design works. During this process, the Talisman culture has not only developed correspondingly, but also enriched its expression forms and symbolic elements in our design products. The unique Talisman schema can be used as a reference for font design and graphic design. It is expected that the redesign of the visual language based on the decomposition and analysis of the Talisman image structure can inspire contemporary designers to create more cultural and creative works with rich forms.

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