



A Study of Bronze Animal Motif Cultural and Creative Products in the New Media Era

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Abstract. Bronze has a pivotal role in traditional Chinese culture. One of the things that made bronze culture important to traditional Chinese culture is its motifs. The most representative animal motifs reflect the aesthetic orientation of the society at that time and have a high artistic value. In the age of new media, the use of advanced digital technology has enriched the form of bronze animal motifs, accelerated the spread of traditional Chinese culture and made it more presentable on the global stage. The present study examines the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of bronze animal motifs in the new media era and their current status, analyses the impact of the new media era on bronze animal motifs and proposes suggestions for their development.

Keywords: Bronze; Animal motifs; Cultural and creative products; New media; Cultural communication; Chinese traditional culture

1 Introduction

Bronze is one of the most colorful chapters in the history of China, and the importance and role of the most representative animal motifs has been greatly studied by many scholars ^[1]. Chinese bronze wares are a classic representation of ritual system and social progress ^[2-3], and they are inheritability in their design ^[4]. Chinese bronze culture is a collision between Chinese and foreign cultures ^[5], which shows the wisdom of Chinese civilization.

The shapes, patterns and decorations of bronze objects are embedded in Chinese culture. In tradition, they represent politics, power, wealth, and good blessings ^[6-7].

In the late prehistoric agricultural civilization, with the development of technology, the style of bronze animal motifs and casting process developed rapidly ^[8-9]. In an era of prevalent new media, the design and development of many cultural and creative products are not limited to collections in the traditional sense, but have begun to de

exhibitions held regularly [10-12]. They have designed creative cultural products with animal prints on bronzes to suit their own development processing according to cultural characteristics and attributes [13], integrating traditional Chinese culture into their creative products and exploring the cultural connotations while developing more products that meet the audience's preferences.

Therefore, it is extremely important to research the artistic features and cultural connotations contained in the bronze animal motifs and their current status, analyze the impact of the new media era on the bronze animal motifs and make suggestions for their development.

2 Bronze animal motifs

2.1 The origin of animal motifs of Chinese bronze ware

Early human society, with its low level of productivity and limited cognitive ability, interpreted some unexplained phenomena in nature as calamities sent down by the gods to mankind, and was filled with fear and awe of nature, so people pinned their hopes on animals, believing them to be gods sent from heaven to guard the earth, and regarded them as the gods of their clans.

People at that time usually engraved bronze wares with an animal's head in a human's body or a human's head in an animal's body to the animal motifs which were used to ward off evil spirits. The bronze motifs, represented by the animal motifs, continue to create an atmosphere of early Chinese civilization that not only directly reflects the cultural connotations of the period, but also has a profound influence on future generations.

2.2 Design characteristics of animal motifs in bronze

There were fewer animal motifs on bronzes in the Xia Dynasty. By the Shang and Zhou periods, bronze animal motifs began to appear commonly and became complex and mysterious. There are two main types of animal patterns in the Shang and Zhou periods, the first one is animal patterns that are not found in the real world, such as the kui dragon pattern (Fig. 1), the second one is the real animal pattern, such as the tortoise pattern (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. The kui dragon pattern

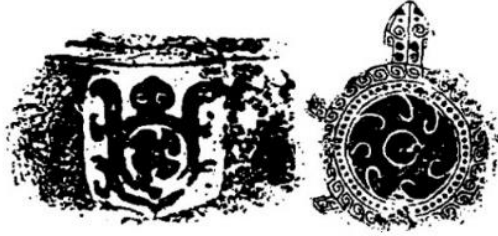


Fig. 2. The tortoise pattern

From the technical point of view, the animal motifs of the early Shang dynasty bronzes were initially only relatively single patterns, with rigid lines and simple carvings, for example, the early Shang bronze Taotie image was relatively loose, with a single striped cloth pattern, mostly depicted with lines. Most of them have a simple form.

By the middle and late Shang dynasty, bronze animal motifs had made great progress in terms of content engraving, spatial expression and production techniques, mostly based on specific animal images, and the lines became finer and denser from the original roughness, with gorgeous and mysterious characteristics.

By the Western Zhou period, bronze animal patterns tended to be dull and fixed, and the power of the mythology expressed diminished and tended to be realistic, with a significant increase in the number of animal patterns on bronze represented by the divine bird and dragon patterns.

In the heyday of bronze, people in that age extracted the main features and outlines of the objects depicted are extracted and enlarged, exaggerated and deformed to give the motifs a richness and a sense of hierarchy, for example, the common deer, frog, snake and cicada motifs. The elephant motif focuses on its body and long trunk, while the bird motif focuses on the enlargement of the tail feathers, which are later exaggerated further, gradually developing closer to the phoenix motif.

These animal motifs reflect the fact that as the times progressed, people became more sophisticated in their graphic work and were able to capture the main features of the animals and, on the basis of their general appearance, create motifs with a strong decorative meaning. At the same time, these animal figures are also a reproduction of the real life of the society of the time.

3 An overview of creative products with animal motifs in bronze in the new media era

3.1 Overview of the new media age

New media is relative to traditional media, distinguished from traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television, and is a media platform developed mainly on the basis of the Internet.

As a dynamic concept, the connotation of new media is constantly developing and changing, and has outstanding information dissemination capabilities. Based on the perspective of information dissemination, new media has advantageous features such as fast dissemination, digitalization, interactivity and is free from the constraints of time and space.

In the new media era, the cultural and creative industries and the Internet are constantly colliding and fusing, and then forming an emerging cultural field. The cultural and creative industry is an emerging industry with creativity at its core, which arises in the context of economic globalization, and broadly speaking encompasses creative groups in many aspects such as visual arts and media.

Among the cultural and creative industries, creative products are widely known because of their figurative characteristics, as well as their productization, high added value and are consumable.

In that case, they have been strongly supported and developed in recent years. The new media era has changed the traditional media environment and communication methods of cultural and creative products, greatly enriched the forms and communication methods of cultural and creative products, and expanding the consumption methods and markets through new communication platforms.

A good cultural and creative product should have three characteristics: aesthetics, function and connotation, combining the three will form a good cultural and creative product in the new media era.

3.2 Overview of Bronze Animal Motif Cultural and Creative Products

3.2.1. The artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of bronze animal motifs in cultural and creative products

Based on traditional animal motifs, the Bronze Animal Motifs cultural and creative products are improved by tapping into creative elements and other modern techniques, giving the ancient traditional motifs a lighter design, making them more in line with modern aesthetic, living needs and close to life.

It also injects vitality of new media to these products by some techniques such as arranging and combining images, colors and other elements according to certain rules, incorporating new contemporary elements, applying new materials to produce objects to convey the designer's intentions.

These cultural and creative products resonate with people through visual language, show new cultural forms and artistic styles, and reinterpret the high artistic quality and beauty of bronze animal patterns by inheriting the history and cultural connotation of ancient civilizations, evoking people's attention and thinking about traditional culture and humanistic spirit, improving people's cultural literacy and aesthetic level, and thus spreading traditional Chinese culture.

For example, the three pieces suit of the Drawing Ruler developed by the Shanxi Museum (Fig. 3) are based on the idea of the Jin Hou Niao Zun bronze (Fig. 4), of the Zhao Qing Niao Zun bronze (Fig. 5) and the Xiao You bronze (Fig. 6).

As a representative of Western Zhou bronze ritual vessels, the Jin Hou Niao Zun bronze is of outstanding form and rich historical value, and is regarded as a treasure of the Shanxi Museum. The the Zhao Qing Niao Zun bronze is a masterpiece of late Jin Dynasty, with a bird of prey standing with its head held high, its wings carved in relief throughout, and its feather pattern magnificently clear. The Xiao You bronze, with two owls standing back-to-back, is a vivid and rounded example of a late Shang dynasty bronze vessel. The creative products designed with these bronze animal motifs express the deep historical heritage of Chinese bronze culture.

The design of these cultural and creative products retains the original basic shape of the bronze animal motifs and combines them with bamboo material, using a vivid and simple painting style and a unique and interesting composition to show the majestic atmosphere and strange and dynamic nature of the bronzes in the Jin Dynasty, highlighting the glorious civilization of the Chinese nation. At the same time, it expresses the hope that people are able to feel the cultural inculcation in the work and draw from it the wisdom of the ancients to move forward better.



Fig. 3. The three pieces suit of the Drawing Ruler



Fig. 4. The Jin Hou Niao Zun bronze



Fig. 5. The Zhao Qing Niao Zun bronze



Fig. 6. The Xiao You bronze

3.2.2. The current status of bronze animal motif cultural and creative products

Bronze animal motifs have entered the new media era, and the environment for the dissemination of cultural and creative products has changed dramatically, with more diversified communication methods, no longer limited to one-way communication, but moving in the direction of diversification. The design and development are not simply a reproduction or imitation of bronze animal motifs, but is based on the cultural connotation behind the bronze animal motifs, and incorporates fresh creative elements, while focusing on the practical value of the product, thus attracting more consumers and allowing its culture to truly integrate into the lives of the public, while more and more bronze animal motifs cultural and creative products are spreading to show the characteristics of the public.

For example, the Niao Zun badge developed by the Shanxi Museum (Fig. 7) combines elements of bronze animal motifs with alloy technology, allowing people to better understand history through a modern perspective and the beautiful symbolism

conveyed to them by the bronze animal motifs in history. The bronze animal motifs communicate with the public through articles for daily use and complete the dialogue beyond time and space.

These badge products bring the traditionally serious and mysterious bronze animal motifs closer to life and full of vitality, better catering to the aesthetics of young people, attracting the public to learn about history and culture, experiencing the charm of cultural relics, accelerating the spread of traditional Chinese culture, and increasing cultural confidence and national pride. The style of the bronze animal badge is interesting, and through the attractive pattern and style, it stimulates people's interest and enthusiasm in the creative products, increases the speed of dissemination of the creative products and enhances consumers' desire to purchase the products.



Fig. 7. The Niao Zun badge

4 The impact of the new media era on the cultural and creative products with bronze animal motifs

4.1 Enriching the form of bronze animal motif cultural and creative products

In the age of new media, traditional culture is facing its own challenges, and cultural and creative products with bronze animal motifs are innovating in response to the development of media technology. Today's era of bronze animal motifs is no longer limited to stationery, jewelry, clothing, etc. On the basis of the original, many provincial museums have developed bronze animal motifs cultural and creative products in line with the new media era, such as the 3D creative bronze elephant pattern potted magnets developed by the Hunan Museum (Fig. 8).

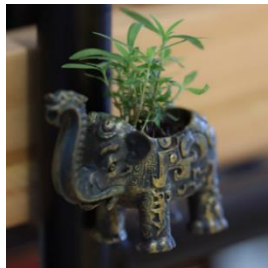


Fig. 8. The 3D creative bronze elephant pattern potted magnet



Fig. 9. A Shang Dynasty bronze elephant

Its design was inspired by a Shang Dynasty bronze elephant excavated in 1975 (Fig. 9), with animal motifs such as dragons, phoenixes and tigers on the vessel, especially the phoenix bird and tiger motifs on the elephant bronze, which retains the characteristics of an elephant's trunk while shaping a phoenix bird and tiger.

Its design details, reproduce the original animal pattern of bronze, engraved lines are clear and smooth to the touch. The use of magnets as a cultural and creative carrier was initially for the effect of decoration and memo instant stickers. Besides, it combining the elements of its own collection with the refrigerator stickers. It was designed as a potted plant refrigerator sticker that can be planted, and inside the box, a grass seed packet is built in, achieving the effect of multi-purpose and modern practical beauty, and hoping that the purchaser can live each day with vigor and vitality.

4.2 Enriching the dissemination of bronze animal motif cultural and creative products

The bronze animal prints are not only known through traditional media such as TV and newspapers, but also effectively disseminated through new media platforms. In the era of new media, the rich form of communication can combine text, audio, and images, making the content more attractive to the public, and everyone can become a promoter, making the content more popular. Many of the bronze animal print products have been disseminated through the official new media, allowing people to have a more comprehensive and intuitive understanding and quickly explore the historical background and cultural connotations behind them, attracting numerous fans, such as the "Bird Ice Cream" of the Shanxi Museum (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. The "Bird Ice Cream"

Shanxi Museum official Douyin (TikTok) account, the first viewer's perspective to launch a small video to show the ice cream, which lasts less than forty seconds and contains a variety of knowledge points such as "Jinhou Bird" as the emblem of the Shanxi Museum, the history of the treasure of the museum, and then launched the new "Bird Ice Cream".

At the same time, a number of medias were invited to promote the new product "Bird Ice Cream" by joining the Douyin "Cultural and Creative Ice Cream Battle Competition" and "Shanxi Cultural and Creative Ice Cream Application Battle" topics using the official Douyin channel.

As soon as the "Bird Ice Cream" was launched, the related topic in Douyin broke through many news, hit the hot list, and topped the list of the intra-city. The video of "Bird Ice Cream" also received 82,000 likes and more than 4,000 comments. The same topic also received more than 13.6 million reads on Sina Weibo. On the Xiaohongshu platform, there is also a continuous discussion, which attracts visitors to the site, and some even commented that visitors almost have a "Bird Ice Cream" in their hands.

As the first cultural creation ice-cream of Shanxi Museum, Shanxi Museum integrates the concept of the "past life and present life" of the bronze, and chooses mango flavor to restore the splendor of the Bird in gold. At the same time, using the WeChat official account, together with more intuitive and comprehensive graphics, the process of changing the bronze from gold to the present copper green is told to the audience, allowing people to quickly explore the history and cultural connotation behind the "Bird Ice Cream".

4.3 Expanding consumption patterns and consumer markets

The new media age has seen a change in the way people consume. More and more museums are adding ways to sell their bronze animal print cultural products in their offline shops, alongside their online shops. Various small shops on the internet have prepared a large number of images and video materials for customers, and the process of shopping and paying can be completed with a simple movement and click of the mouse. This change has greatly facilitated the shopper and made the act of consumption compatible with a large number of social activities, the temporal and spatial limits of consumption have been broken down and the possibilities and absolute value of consumption have increased considerably. As more and more museums are officially represented on new media platforms and regularly open live shopping and video presentations, people are able to experience traditional culture while selecting and placing orders for bronze animal print cultural and creative products without having to leave home.

Driven by technology and supported by the Internet in the new media era, the new media platform continues to integrate industry channels and resources, strengthen core competencies such as content creativity and optimized data analysis, and continue to expand the consumer market. New media platforms include WeChat Public, Jitterbug and Little Red Book, etc. Communication in the new media era has shaped an image with a voice and character that allows consumers to better understand the cultural connotations of bronze animal motif cultural and creative products. Through the production

and promotion of social media platforms, consumers are able to maintain close interaction with the Bronze Animal Motifs cultural and creative products, and enable two-way interaction between users to expand their visibility and influence.

5 Suggestions for the development of bronze animal motif cultural and creative products in the new media era

5.1 To focus on the transmission of traditional Chinese culture

The design of bronze animal motifs shoulders the important task of passing on traditional Chinese culture. Bronze animal motifs reflect the atmosphere of early Chinese civilization and have a profound historical and cultural heritage. Its abundant design features can be tapped and developed, and it is an inexhaustible treasure trove of materials for cultural and creative products. The historical and cultural values it contains, the wisdom of the ancients and the aesthetic sensibility it brings together are presented through the dissemination of cultural and creative products.

For instance, designers can combine the elements of dynasties such as poems, songs and fugue and integrate their ideas, so that customers can appreciate the bronze animal pattern cultural and creative products while understanding their cultural background, improve humanistic cultivation, explore the fun and spiritual connotation of Chinese traditional culture in depth, and deepen their perception and recognition of Chinese traditional culture.

5.2 To enhance the use of information technology

The application of information technology has become one of the indispensable technologies in today's society. In order to win the attention and favor of a wider audience, it is necessary to strengthen the application of information technology, using the Internet platform to expand the communication channels, expand the coverage of the bronze animal motifs cultural and creative products, and create greater economic and social benefits.

For case, designers can integrate virtual information such as graphic images and 3D models, and add QR code hangtags inside the packaging of goods. And through H5 animation and other ways to reproduce the scene, to help people understand its historical background, cultural connotation, to enhance the dissemination and promotion effect of the bronze animal pattern cultural and creative products.

6 Conclusions

Bronze animal motifs have a long history, strong decorative effects and rich cultural connotations, and are the treasures of traditional Chinese culture. The study of the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of animal motifs on bronzes in the new media era, and their current status, is a source of inspiration for modern cultural and creative product design. The new media era offers new opportunities for the

development of bronze animal prints. It is important to grasp the characteristics of the times, to combine the elements of traditional culture, to use digital tools, to create innovative designs, to broaden the channels of communication, deepen consumers' recognition of traditional Chinese culture, so as to realize the dual value of culture and economy and thus accelerate the spread of traditional Chinese culture.

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