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DOOR GODS IN CHINESE FOLK CULTURE AND THEIR ROLE IN MODERN BOOK DESIGN

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This study examines the cultural influence of Chinese door gods on modern book design by systematically analyzing their historical evolution, regional variations, and artistic symbolism. Rooted in ancient folk beliefs and religious rituals, door gods have evolved from abstract totems into highly stylized visual symbols, reflecting shifts in social values and aesthetic preferences. By classifying the types of door gods across northern, western, eastern, and southern China, this study highlights their distinctive artistic styles and their impact on book covers, layouts, and illustrations. The integration of these traditional motifs into contemporary design not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches visual storytelling in modern publishing.

Keywords: door god culture; book design; Chinese folk culture; regional differences; cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

As an important visual symbol in Chinese traditional culture, door gods have undergone a historical transformation from abstract symbols to concrete images, from amulet totems in ancient times to woodblock New Year paintings in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Their artistic expressions and cultural symbolic meanings have also evolved with the development of society, culture and religion [3]. At the same time, the artistic expressions of door gods have gradually shown distinct style differences in different regions. This article will deeply analyze the regional differences in door god images and their influence in book design, explore how this visual element is cleverly used in modern book covers, illustrations and layout design, and reveal how door gods have become an important symbol in China's contemporary design language.

PURPOSE

This study aims to analyze the process of the door god image's transformation from a primitive symbol to a social and cultural symbol, and to analyze the regional differences of the door gods from aspects such as artistic style. In addition, the article will also study the influence of the door god elements on modern book design.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The image of door gods has evolved from initial symbolization to figuration, and then to the integration of historical figures and religious elements, gradually forming a rich visual language. In the traditional image of door gods, symbolic expression makes the image of door gods full of mystery and symbolic meaning, especially the early human-faced peach charms, which expressed the need for protection and exorcism through simple symbols (Fig. 1, a), [5]. In the Han Dynasty, the image of door gods began to become warriors, reflecting the symbol of social order and power, such as the stone statues of Shentu and Yulei unearthed from Han tombs (Fig. 1, b), [4]. The symmetrical composition and dynamic line tension of this period became common forms of design later. In the Tang and Song Dynasties, the image of door gods began to be historicized and religiousized [1]. The image of door gods began to integrate the sacred elements of Buddhism and Taoism [2]. The prevalence of woodblock printing technology in the Song Dynasty made door god paintings widely circulated among the people, and their content and themes began to show a style that combines realism and symbolism. At the same time, the use of fine brushwork techniques made the image of door gods more vivid and delicate, and also enhanced the visual impact (Fig. 1, c).

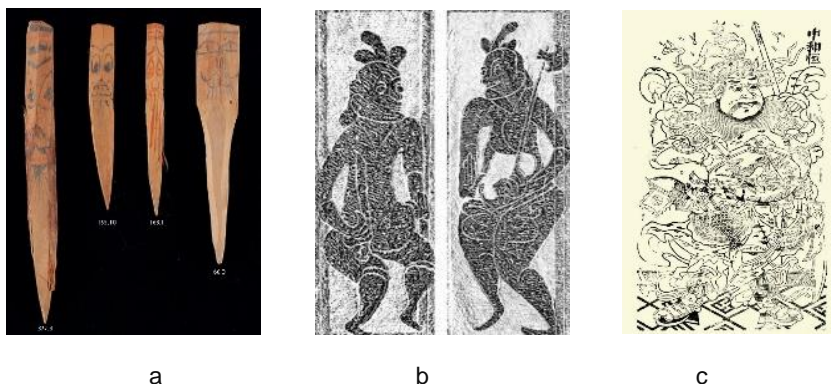


Fig.1. The Evolution of Door Gods: a - Human-faced peach charm, b - Han Dynasty Tomb Stone Relief, c- Song Dynasty Door God Painting.

From a regional analysis, the images of door gods in the north, west, east and south show obvious differences, which deeply reflects the unique cultural background and aesthetic trends of various parts of China. The door gods in the north are mainly military generals, emphasizing majesty and order. The door gods in Wuqiang New Year paintings reflect a strong sense of power and authority (Fig. 2, a). The door gods in the west incorporate more natural elements and religious symbols, showing awe for nature and divine power (Fig. 2, b). The door gods in the east are characterized by elegance and delicacy, and the pattern design often incorporates elements of literati paintings (Fig. 2, c). The door gods in the south



express warm emotions with bright colors and diverse totems, integrating the cultural characteristics of multiple ethnic groups and having a unique visual impact (Fig. 2, d).

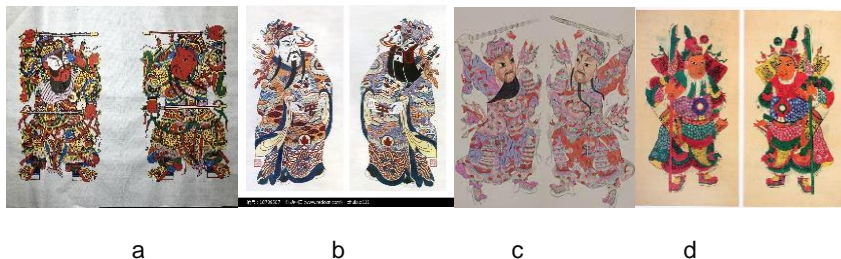


Fig.2. Door God Paintings in Different Regions: a - Northern Region, b - Western Region, c- Eastern Region, d- Southern Region.

The influence of the image of door gods in modern book design is first reflected in the extensive use of similar but not identical symmetrical compositions in cover design. This composition method reflects the sense of order and protection of the cover on the one hand, and on the other hand reflects the Chinese cultural characteristics of yin and yang balance. For example, "Chinese Memory - Treasures of Five Thousand Years of Civilization" designed by Lv Jingren (Fig. 3, a). Secondly, the proportions and line styles of the characters in the door god paintings have unique and strong visual characteristics, which can be used in modern book illustrations to highlight China's cultural characteristics and core. For example, Liu Dongxia's illustrations for "Beasts on Stilts" (Fig. 3, b). Finally, Zhang Zhiqi's work "Talking about Dance: Oral History of Shandong's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" Dance" uses the unique contrasting colors of door god paintings in modern books, which not only reflects the characteristics of Chinese folk culture, but also greatly enhances readers' cultural identity with books (Fig. 3c).



Fig.3. Examples of Book Design: a - "Chinese Memory - Five Thousand Years of Civilization Treasures", b - "Beasts on Stilts", c- "Dance Leaves Traces: Oral History of Shandong's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" Dance".



CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the evolution of door gods' imagery reflects the transformations in Chinese traditional culture and social aesthetics. These images not only embody societal beliefs but also convey multi-layered cultural symbolism. Regional diversity has led to the development of distinctive artistic styles across different areas. These characteristics have significantly influenced modern book design. The incorporation of door god elements in contemporary book design demonstrates how traditional folk symbols enrich visual language and cultural connotations in modern design. Furthermore, the reinterpretation of these motifs in a contemporary context bridges the gap between historical heritage and modern creativity. This ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation ensures the continued relevance of cultural symbols in visual communication.

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ЖЕНЬ Юйтянь, ДУБРИВНА А.

БОЖЕСТВА-ХРАНИТЕЛІ ВОРИТ В КИТАЙСЬКІЙ НАРОДНІЙ КУЛЬТУРІ ТА ЇХ РОЛЬ У СУЧАСНОМУ КНИЖКОВОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ

У цьому дослідженні розглядається вплив божеств-охоронців воріт у китайській народній культурі на сучасний книжковий дизайн. Проаналізовано їхню історичну еволюцію, регіональні варіації та художній символізм, що відображають зміни суспільних цінностей та естетичних уподобань. Особливу увагу приділено класифікації образів у різних регіонах Китаю та їхньому впливу на обкладинки, макети й ілюстрації. Інтеграція цих мотивів у сучасне книговидання сприяє збереженню культурної спадщини та збагачує візуальну мову книжкового дизайну.

Ключові слова: божества-охоронці воріт, книжковий дизайн, китайська народна культура, регіональні відмінності, культурна спадщина.