

The Aesthetic Value of Traditional Zhuang Patterns in Home Product Design in Guangxi

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Abstract:

The traditional designs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi have their roots in the ancient Luoyue culture of the Zhuang people. Over the course of millennia, they have cultivated a distinctive artistic aesthetic imbued with profound cultural significance. The article initially presents an overview of the genesis and progression of the customary designs of the Zhuang ethnic community in Guangxi. It further furnishes an elaborate account of their categorization and distinguishing features, encompassing geometric motifs, animal depictions, human representations, and botanical designs. Furthermore, the study examines the aesthetic criteria for designing household products, highlighting the significance of soothing colours and visually appealing forms. Furthermore, the utilisation of traditional patterns from the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi is exemplified in modern home design through two specific instances: the bronze drum coffee table and the Zhuang brocade diamond pattern lamp. This showcases the significance of form and imitation in conveying their cultural value. In conclusion, the essay provides an overview of the aesthetic significance of the traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi when it comes to designing household products. It highlights the importance for designers to possess a sharp perception and deep understanding in order to increase the cultural meanings and aesthetic worth of these products.

Keywords:

Zhuang Patterns, Home Products, Aesthetic Value

1. Introduction

Guangxi is situated on the southern frontier of the Chinese Mainland. Despite being the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, this area is home to twelve ethnic groups that have been here for many generations, flourishing and increasing in number. The twelve ethnic minorities include Zhuang, Han, Yao, Miao, Dong, Mulam, Maonan, Hui, Jing, Shui, and Gelao. These ethnic groups have established themselves and

flourished in Guangxi, engaging in rigorous work and continuous interaction with nature, mountains, history, development, society, and life. As a result, they have developed distinctive living habits and created a wide range of patterns and things that are abundant in ethnic cultural traits. These items are abundant in substance and represent the distinct regional style and characteristics of Guangxi. Among the various ethnic cultural resources, the traditional patterns of the Guangxi Zhuang people stand out as the most diverse and widely utilised. The term “application” in this context pertains to the incorporation of ancient patterns and cultural essence into contemporary stylistic components and design. It involves the utilisation of the aesthetic experiences derived from historical human labour and social practices in the realm of current design.

2. The Conventional Patterns of the Zhuang Ethnic Group in Guangxi

The traditional designs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi have their roots in the ancient Luoyue culture of the Zhuang people. These visual features were produced by the ancestors of the Zhuang people to aid in their production, labour, and practical activities. After millennia of adaptation and progress, they have ultimately established a national cultural asset with a distinctive artistic style and significant aesthetic worth.

2.1. The genesis and evolution of traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi

Prior to delving into the roots of conventional designs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi, it is imperative to comprehend the origins of the Zhuang people. The historical papers of the Han people during the pre-Qin, Qin, and Han dynasties contain records referring to the Zhuang people as “Xiwu” and “Luoyue.” During that period, these territories were part of the Lingnan Region, which corresponds to the present-day provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi. Based on the historical trajectory and documented records, the forebears of Xiwu and Luoyue progressively transitioned into a civilised era through their productive activities, labour, and social practical knowledge. The traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi originate from the careful observation, exploration, and comprehension of nature by the Zhuang ancestors. These patterns are then blended with their social production, labour, and practical knowledge.

According to historical developments and documents, the evolution of traditional patterns in Guangxi Zhuang can be categorised into three distinct periods. During the early society period, pottery and stone implements often displayed designs characterised by simple, understated, and rough shapes. During the feudal society period, various designs were frequently observed on iron and bronze tools, as well as on woven objects, production and living utensils, and buildings. The advent of iron and bronze tools signified the progress in agriculture and the growing proficiency in manufacturing abilities throughout that period. China launched a new era of openness and inclusivity during the modern period. With the advent of Western civilization, people’s aesthetic perceptions underwent a transformation. Traditional Zhuang designs progressively assimilated modern aesthetic ideals while preserving their inherent creative qualities. This was seen in the simplification of patterns and the use of visually striking colour effects. (Figure 1, Figure 2)



Figure 1. *Primitive Society Pottery.*



Figure 2. *Ironware in Feudal Society*

2.2. Categorization and distinguishing features of conventional designs belonging to the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi

The design elements of traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi are highly intricate and diverse. The patterns can be primarily categorised into four groups based on their content: geometry, animals, vegetation, and characters.

Firstly, let's discuss geometric patterns. Geometric patterns are designs that utilise the outline shape of an object as the fundamental element. Geometric patterns commonly consist of circles, squares, diamonds, triangles, and arcs. Geometric patterns commonly manifest in a continuous shape that exists in either two dimensions or four dimensions. These patterns are created based on observations of nature and manufacturing techniques. For instance, the visual representation of cloud and thunder patterns relies on the utilisation of circles or squares as the fundamental shape components, in conjunction with different modifications of cloud and thunder elements. (Figure 3)

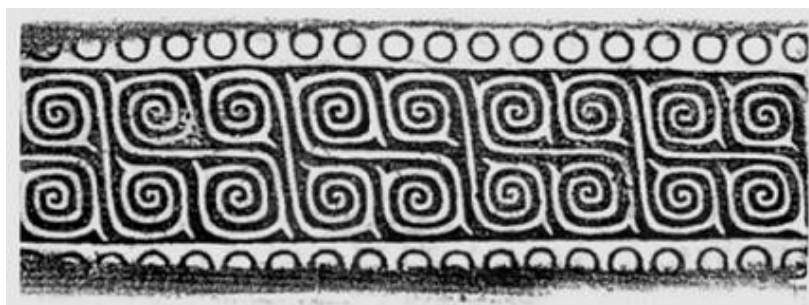


Figure 3. *Cloud and Thunder Pattern.*

Secondly, animal patterns. Animal patterns are created by making slight modifications to the exterior traits of animals. The origin of these patterns arises from human observation and comprehension of natural objects. The animal aspects encompass mythical creatures such as dragons and phoenixes, as well as real-life creatures like birds, flowers, fish, frogs, and elephants. Animal patterns can manifest as either discrete patterns or as a continuous pattern. The utilisation of animal patterns serves not only as a kind of embellishment, but also as a manifestation of human astute perception and aspirations for life, which will be expounded upon in the subsequent discourse. (Figure 4)



Figure 4. Fish Pattern.

Thirdly, the figure pattern. The majority of figure patterns primarily utilise lines for modelling. The human dynamic structure is simplified by observing the linear variations in the figure's body dynamics. This allows for the delineation of qualities related to dance, hunting, worship, labour, and other movements through the use of lines. Figure patterns in modelling have smooth contours, intricate dynamics, and profound significance. The murals on Huashan Mountain in Ningming County, Chongzuo, Guangxi, are exemplary examples of figure patterns. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Huashan Rock Paintings.

Finally, plant patterns. Plant patterns predominantly showcase flowers as the principal design components, encompassing leaf forms and petals. These patterns are frequently formed by the two-dimensional depiction of organic entities. Various sorts of flowers possess distinct symbolic connotations in their design and styling. Hence, the manifestation of plant patterns also signifies the comprehension and anticipations of human existence. One of the most notable instances is the flower motif discovered in Zhuang brocade. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. Zhuang Brocade Plant Pattern.

2.3. Totem Worship among the Zhuang Ethnic Group in Guangxi

Totem worship is the act of considering some objects, such animals and plants, as sacred symbols. People worship and admire these objects, hoping to gain special

powers and heavenly favours via their worship and belief. The religious practices of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi involve the veneration of totems, which include various animals such as frogs, water buffaloes, egrets, elephants, and golden chickens. The practice of totem worship originates from the innate human apprehension towards the unfamiliar, with individuals seeking to have their desires and blessings fulfilled by demonstrating deep respect and devotion. Of all these practices, the veneration of frogs is the oldest and most esteemed by the Zhuang people. This text will provide detailed explanations of three iconic instances of totem veneration.

Firstly, the veneration of frogs. According to the pertinent myths of Buluotuo, frogs were first considered the offspring of the deity associated with thunder. Frogs have the capacity to influence rainfall and mitigate the occurrence of droughts and floods, as their croaking has the potential to prompt the god of thunder to provide rain. Historically, there was a severe scarcity of human resources for both production and daily life, as there was a dearth of scientific and technological advancements. Additionally, individuals had limited knowledge and comprehension of astronomy and geography. These obstacles were significant challenges that humans encountered while participating in agricultural labour. Consequently, humans desire advantageous weather conditions and a plentiful harvest, with rainfall being the most vital element in fulfilling these aspirations. Consequently, frogs hold a treasured status as the guardian of the Zhuang ethnic group, and the Zhuang people have a strong affinity for stories and legends including frogs. Furthermore, the Zhuang “Ma Guai Festival” is a traditional festival celebrated by the Zhuang people, which centres around the worship of frogs. It holds significant importance within the Zhuang community and is considered a somewhat large-scale event. Frogs are frequently depicted in Zhuang brocade embroidered crafts and are also used as designs on Zhuang copper drums. These techniques harmonise the divine capabilities bestowed upon frogs by human hearts with the strength they want to acquire via prayer.

Secondly, the veneration of water buffalo. Historical records indicate that the Zhuang people have engaged in agriculture as their primary means of subsistence since ancient times. Agriculture has undergone significant progress, leading to the emergence of many labour instruments that have become crucial for farming as a productive activity. The water buffalo naturally became a significant production tool for the Zhuang people, serving as an important partner and aid during the agricultural era. Consequently, the Zhuang people highly value the spirituality, physical prowess, and work capacity of water buffaloes, considering them as a representation of hard work and might. During a time when labour and production were not advanced, mankind faced challenges in achieving a bountiful harvest and satisfying their needs. Due to the insufficiency of personnel, technology, and resources, individuals relied on the aid of labour and physical help. By observing water buffalo, people became aware of their labour capabilities and were inclined to view them as divine beings sent to assist them. The veneration of water buffalo is indicative of human understanding of production and labour methods.

Thirdly, the veneration of the Xianglu. The Xianglu is a hybrid creature that combines characteristics of both birds and beasts. In previous times, humans were limited to terrestrial pursuits, whereas birds possessed the capability to effortlessly glide and navigate through the atmosphere. Given the significant disparity in capacities, individuals aspired to attain the same capabilities as birds. They revered avian creatures, held faith in their existence, and considered birds and animals as

emblems of auspiciousness and affluence. The Xianglu motif is commonly found on numerous items.

Totem worship represents the important importance that pattern elements and their symbolism have in the hearts of the Zhuang people. Patterns in Zhuang traditional culture serve as both decorative components and symbolic representations of the Zhuang people's profound connection with nature and their reverence for all living beings. These derivative behaviours, such as prayers, divine blessings, and myths, arise from the continuous expansion of human experiences, knowledge, and life goals. They epitomise the inherent human desire for aesthetics and tranquilly, symbolising a shift from the tangible to the metaphysical realm of nourishment.

3. Designing Home Products with Aesthetic Requirements

As individuals' spiritual and material demands continue to develop, their aesthetic choices also undergo transformation. In Chinese culture, the concept of home is seen as a sanctuary for the spirit, and the creation of home goods must correspond with personal aesthetic preferences in order to fulfil the emotional connection and longing individuals have for their houses.

3.1. Color Comfort

Colour comfort pertains to the criteria derived from the fundamental principles of colour psychology concerning colour qualities. Colour variations in the design of home objects can elicit specific cognitive perceptions and trigger corresponding neural responses. The primary prerequisite for individuals to notice and encounter products is the presence of colour comfort. Colour selection in contemporary design styles primarily revolves around the overarching aesthetic of the residence. For instance, while creating a new Chinese-style setting, it is important to prioritise the harmonious coordination of wood tones in the design of household items. Designers must carefully contemplate methods for achieving a sophisticated, enduring, and steadfast visual impact using colour within the context of the new Chinese style ambiance. Indeed, numerous home items possess vibrant hues. However, when these items are placed in the same physical setting, it becomes crucial to take into account variations in colour perception, such as coolness, warmth, sensitivity, and depth.

3.2. Beautiful appearance

The aesthetic design of a product is a critical component of home product design. The visual appeal of the design immediately affects the initial perception individuals have of the product and then influences their buying behaviour. Various demographic groups have distinct perceptions of design aesthetics. When it comes to aesthetic endeavours, achieving equilibrium in the design of household products is crucial. In order to excel in home product design, whether it be a distinctive or enduring design style, it is imperative to surpass and introduce new elements to prior designs. Amid a multitude of standardised products, those that possess unique design characteristics are more noticeable. By incorporating Zhuang patterns into home product design in a suitable and logical manner, the timeless beauty of these patterns may be showcased from many perspectives, injecting a new and appealing aesthetic into the design of home items.

4. An Analysis of the Traditional Patterns of the Guangxi Zhuang Ethnic Group in the Design of Home Products

This article examines two specific designs as case examples, incorporating the sun pattern found on Zhuang metal drums and the diamond pattern found on Zhuang brocade. The two design aspects are reinterpreted and imaginatively implemented based on two aesthetic criteria.

4.1. Tea table made from a bronze drum

The Zhuang bronze drum has a historical lineage of more than 2,700 years within the ancient customs of the Zhuang ethnic community. Over time, it has endured and transformed from a container for liquids into a musical instrument played by striking it. The surface of the Zhuang metal drum is indeed smooth and expansive, often described as being “over a zhang wide.” The design of the bronze drum tea table draws influence from two distinct characteristics. The bronze drum, as a quintessential symbol of Zhuang traditional culture, serves to preserve and enhance its artistic significance. It facilitates a more profound comprehension of Zhuang drum culture among a wider audience, while also demonstrating a strong cultural assurance in contemporary design. Conversely, the bronze drum maintains a steady and distinctive shape, with a wide top and a narrower bottom, while yet maintaining its equilibrium. This characteristic renders it exceptionally practical.

The bronze drum is composed of copper, resulting in a rich brown hue that enhances visual comfort. This colour has a consistent and unchanging shade. The sun pattern is employed in the aesthetic design to mirror the artistic pattern of the bronze drum. (Figure 7)



Figure 7. Sun-patterned bronze drum coffee table.

The tea table object featured in the image incorporates design elements derived from the Guangxi Zhuang bronze drum, particularly its sun pattern. In terms of home product design, the tea table maintains the cylindrical form of the classic bronze drum, with a wider top and a smaller bottom. The tabletop is level and ideal for holding tea sets. It features radial lines arranged in a sun pattern, which creates a visual illusion of the sun emitting its light, evoking a feeling of the sun's luminosity. The tea table (drum) is equipped with concealed sliding doors that offer storage capacity for tea sets and tea leaves. The design of this tea table incorporates sun pattern features to highlight the natural texture of the bronze drum material, emphasising its colour and keeping the original colour of the drum. The sun pattern on the tabletop adds visual interest and enhances the artistic appeal of the tea table. This product showcases the distinctive craftsmanship of the Zhuang bronze drum through its form and hue.

Regarding its application in home products, this tea table features a straightforward form and consistent colour, highlighting a minimalist design aesthetic. Hence, it is well-suited for both minimalist and light luxury home settings, and can be used in various locations such as living rooms, study rooms, and balconies.

4.2. The table lamp features a diamond design made of Zhuang brocade

The diamond pattern is a prevalent ornamental design in Zhuang brocade, symbolising the ancient Zhuang people's ability to imitate and convey concrete items in an abstract manner. During the process of copying, the diamond pattern experiences ongoing differentiation and recombination, leading to a diverse range of shapes. The diamond pattern is a geometric design that has a high level of aesthetic appeal and is abundant in human creativity. The weaving process of Zhuang brocade frequently incorporates the diamond pattern in a two-dimensional, uninterrupted manner. This approach creates a recurring and continuous visual appeal by employing repeated stacking and continuous arrangement methods. Furthermore, the diamond motif is employed for embellishing numerous pottery, ironware, and various other objects. This lamp showcases a design that utilises the repeated arrangement of the diamond pattern seen in Zhuang brocade, highlighting the aesthetic appeal of this particular pattern.

In terms of home product design, diamond patterns have the ability to be applied to any colour. When placed on a white background, they can produce a visually captivating effect in the home setting. The two lamps shown below have cylindrical lampshades, creating a steady and visually pleasing appearance. The distinction resides in the divergence of the diamond patterns and the configuration of the base, with the left one exhibiting a more simplistic aesthetic and the right one showcasing a more sophisticated appearance. These findings demonstrate that diverse alterations and configurations of diamond patterns can yield distinct visual outcomes. Regarding the application of home products, the lamps may be utilised in various areas such as living rooms, study rooms, tea rooms, and other domestic spaces. Additionally, their height can be modified to accommodate certain requirements. This lamp design embodies symmetry, balance, unity, and rhythm, providing both chromatic comfort and aesthetic allure. The design showcases a contemporary and simplistic visual aesthetic, embracing people's longing and adoration for the auspicious meaning of diamond patterns.



Figure 8. Zhuang brocade diamond pattern table lamp.

5. The Aesthetic Value of Traditional Patterns of the Zhuang Ethnic Group in Guangxi in Home Product Design

The traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi have a lengthy historical lineage and have undergone gradual transformations throughout the course of time. The visual arts produced by the ancestors of the Zhuang people are inspired by nature and their life experiences, and possess distinctive aesthetic worth. Utilising these conventional patterns in home product design yields the subsequent visual advantages.

5.1. Formal value

Formal value is a crucial component in all artistic creations, rooted in the aesthetic understanding of form. These characteristics include symmetry, proportion, balance, rhythm, movement, and unity in diversity. In the realm of design, formal value encompasses not only the visual aesthetics but also the intrinsic beauty and harmony of the work.

To begin with, symmetry plays a crucial role in the formal value. Symmetrical patterns can impart a perception of stability and equilibrium, so enhancing the overall harmony of the work. Symmetry is a frequently employed aesthetic technique in both architecture design and home product design. As an illustration, the bronze drum coffee table's design incorporates a circular form and a radial sun pattern on the drum's surface, which creates a compelling sense of symmetrical beauty and enhances the overall visual attractiveness of the piece.

Then, proportion and balance are fundamental components of formal value. Appropriate proportion enhances the coordination of the design, while balance ensures the harmonious integration of different elements. The design of the Zhuang brocade diamond-patterned lamp demonstrates the designer's meticulous understanding of proportion and balance in the quest of aesthetic beauty. This is evident in the repetitive arrangement of diamond patterns and the harmonious matching of the lampshade and base.

Furthermore, the work attains rhythm and movement by skillfully blending repetition and variety, resulting in a lively and dynamic composition. In this article, the bronze drum coffee table and the loom-woven diamond-patterned lamp are designed to generate a visual sense of rhythm through the repetition of patterns and changes in shape. This design approach not only gives the work a static aesthetic, but also conveys a dynamic visual experience.

Finally, The notion of diversity and unity entails developing a harmonious aesthetic by integrating many aspects in design. Designers skillfully integrate diverse pattern elements in the use of traditional patterns from the Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group, maintaining the distinctiveness of each piece while achieving a cohesive style in the entire design. As an illustration, the bronze drum coffee table incorporates sun patterns and seamlessly merges the minimalist style of contemporary home design, effectively fusing tradition with modernity. This results in a piece that offers both cultural richness and a contemporary aesthetic allure.

Based on the analysis provided, it is evident that formal value plays a significant role in art and design. Formal value encompasses not only the external attractiveness, but also the interior organisation and coherence of the artwork. By incorporating the conventional motifs of the Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group into the design of domestic

items, and comprehensively appreciating and harnessing their inherent artistic worth, it is possible to produce artefacts that possess both deep cultural significance and satisfy contemporary aesthetic preferences. This particular design not only enhances the aesthetic worth of the goods, but also contributes to the preservation and advancement of traditional culture.

5.2. The value of imitation

Imitation is not simply duplicating; it is a process of recreating something based on a deep comprehension of the original piece. The process entails introducing innovations while maintaining the fundamental characteristics of the original design and integrating contemporary design principles. When designing household products, the inclusion of traditional patterns from the Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group serves as a reimagining and manifestation of the cultural importance and creative worth of these patterns. When developing a bronze drum coffee table, it is important to not only take into account the original design of the bronze drum pattern, but also to incorporate it into the general style of the contemporary home setting. This will result in a design that combines classic charm with modern beauty. Furthermore, the significance of imitation becomes apparent in the conservation and transmission of customary patterns. By integrating these patterns into contemporary designs, it enables a wider audience to comprehend and admire the traditional patterns of the Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group, therefore fostering enhanced preservation and transmission of these invaluable cultural legacies. To summarise, integrating traditional Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group patterns into home product design is not merely a replication of traditional art, but also a means of preserving and advancing cultural value.

6. Conclusions

The traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi provide considerable aesthetic value in the creation of home products. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the origin, classification, and characteristics of the traditional patterns of the Zhuang ethnic group. This presentation showcases the utilisation of the patterns found in the bronze drum coffee table and the Zhuang brocade diamond-patterned lamp in contemporary home design. The traditional designs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi not only enhance the cultural meaning and visual beauty of household items, but also increase the artistic worth and market competitiveness of these products. Future designers should prioritise the exploration and preservation of the traditional culture of the Zhuang ethnic group. They should integrate this cultural heritage with modern design concepts to create innovative works that blend traditional charm with contemporary aesthetics. This approach will contribute to the sustainable development of traditional culture within the realm of modern design.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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