

# The Application of Chinese Tea Poem Elements in Modern Tea Packaging Design — Taking "Qi Wan" Tea as an Example

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## ABSTRACT

Objective: It is to study the cultural connotation and design language of Chinese traditional tea poem cultural elements in tea packaging design and to expand the ideas of modern tea packaging design. Method: Based on the interpretation of tea poetry, it analyzes the graphics of tea poem images, the extraction of tea poem texts, and the branding of tea poem concepts to summarize the cultural elements and composition methods suitable for tea packaging design. Result: It selects tea poem cultural elements with typicality, and applies them to the cultural and creative product design through redesign. Conclusion: Through the presentation of the process and results of tea packaging design, as well as the extraction and analysis of tea poem cultural elements, it provides elements and methods that can be referred to for tea packaging design.

**Keywords:** Chinese tea culture, Tea poem, Tea packaging design, Modern packaging design.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

China is a major country of consumption of tea, and survey statistics show that more than 90% of Chinese consumers once drank tea in 2022, and about 47.5% of them always maintain the habit of drinking tea in their daily life.<sup>1</sup> It can be said that drinking tea has become a basic necessity in the daily life of the Chinese people. Along with the booming development of China's tea market, the concept of tea packaging design has been constantly updated and the design methods have been diversified, and the packaging of tea products has become an important carrier of China's traditional tea culture[1]. Tea poems are an important part of the elements of Chinese Traditional tea culture. This paper applies tea poem elements to the design of tea product packaging, and comprehensively studies and explores the humanistic connotation of tea poem, so that the tea products infused with Chinese traditional culture and spirit can achieve the complete unity of connotation and expression, which can also

enhance the humanistic attributes of modern tea packaging.

## 2. CHINESE TRADITIONAL TEA POEMS

China's traditional tea culture has a long history of development and origin. And tea poems are an important part of the structure of Chinese tea culture. For thousands of years, the ancestors have left no less than thousands of tea poems and tea lyrics for future generations. Tea poems are not only numerous, but also cover a wide range of topics. Therefore, the exploration and study of tea poem can also be considered as an extension and inheritance of Chinese tea culture. For the Chinese literati, tea has been more than a simple drink since ancient times. They drink tea not only at the level of material enjoyment, but also in the stream of tea fragrance, they compose poems, conveying the infinite true feelings and sincere intentions in their hearts through the ode to tea. In this way, tea, tea drinking activities and tea poems constitute a complementary and inseparable relationship[2].

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1. iMedia Research, "China Tea Industry Development and Consumer Insights Industry Report 2022-2023" [R], 2022 <https://www.iimedia.cn/c400/87099.html>

## **2.1 The Connotation of Tea Poems**

Tea poems usually have a very rich cultural connotation. The tea culture of conveying friendship through tea was very popular as early as the Tang Dynasty, and spread more widely in the Song Dynasty. Many poets began to express their emotions around the tea culture in the form of poems. Therefore, tea poems have gradually become one of the most important parts of Chinese Traditional tea culture. Tea poems are not only a form of poetry, but also a cultural carrier and a way of expression. In ancient society, many literati liked to express their feelings with the help of tea, and tea poem was one of the common ways, which is a special form of linguistic expression that can be easily understood and remembered. For example, many Song poets would invite several friends to the tea house to talk about everything, comment on the world's events, play chess, etc.. In this case, many poets would record their state of mind at that time and place, and expressed their joy in spending time with their friends through tea poems. Similarly, many poets would also use tea poems to express the feelings of homesickness and memorial feelings of loved ones. In addition, people often gave tea as a gift to others, and in this case, for the purpose of courtesy, after a poet accepted the gift, he often expressed the joy of receiving the gift in poetry and used the medium of tea to enhance the communication between people.

Besides, tea poems are often used to appreciate the high art of tea. Tea drinking was a very prevalent cultural activity in ancient Chinese society. The tea making process is more complex, and after the development of the Tang Dynasty, by the Song Dynasty, tea art became a specialized skill with high cultural value and ornamental value. As a result, the Song Dynasty was a time of high prosperity for tea culture, and many excellent poems praising the art of tea appeared. Some poems directly reflected the complex process of tea making at that time: When picking tea, tea farmers carefully selected tea leaves and chose a good time to pick tea. Then came the detailed process of tea making: Tea farmers in the Song Dynasty often ground the tea leaves first and then boiled them to make the tea fragrance better dispersed. After that, there was the skill of whisked tea, which often reflected the tea artist's exquisite skills and deep understanding of tea culture. In addition to this, there were also a large number of tea poems that directly expressed praise for the high level of tea art — Because the art of boiling tea leaves was a

complex skill, there were not too many truly skilled people. Therefore, when poets came into contact with tea artists of excellent skills, they never spared their words of praise to the artists.

Tea poem not only contain people's love for tea, but also contain the poet's perception of life, which makes the cultural connotation of the tea poems richer and fuller. Many ancient poets used tea to express their attitudes toward life and their feelings about life, for example, to express their feelings about opportunities in life. During the Tang Dynasty, when the poets had things that were not going well, they would often express their feelings directly, and the lines of the poems were filled with the hopeless decadence of life's unhappiness. But in the Song Dynasty, poets were more likely to express their openness and transcendence in the face of life's twists and turns, express their optimism in the face of adversity, and express their feelings through tea in their poems. What's more, many poets also used poetry to attack the social climate of luxury, criticizing the aristocracy's at the time ignoring the hardships of the people, to show compassion for the poor people.

## **2.2 The Value of Tea Poems in Contemporary Life**

Today, when people drink tea, they can no longer see the figure of ancient tea art performance, and fewer people use tea poems to express their feelings directly and entrust their emotions. Tea poems seem to exist only in the ancient Chinese tea culture, becoming a corner of the historical culture. However, there are still a large number of tea poems with profound meaning and rich connotation passed down in the world, for future generations to appreciate and taste.

Nowadays, tea poems can still create an elegant and quiet atmosphere, allowing the mind to find a piece of pure land in the hustle and bustle of the city. Nowadays, many tea houses open in downtown, but also can become a piece of extraordinarily simple and elegant "pure land". Some tea houses hang poems inside, some tea sets have tea poems engraved inside, and some tea paintings are together with the corresponding poems. In this environment and atmosphere, people drink tea while chatting with friends, savoring the tea, and talking about life, being very leisurely and relaxed. Even when a person is alone, while tasting a cup of tea and reading those harmoniously rhythmic tea poems and lyrics with a beautiful mood, he can't help producing a sense of relaxation

and happiness. "If you have a peaceful mind, maybe you'll get what you want" is the most famous saying that has been respected by literati and scholars for generations. Tea can not only relieve boredom and refresh oneself, but also can purify the human soul. With the development of social economy, the pace of life is getting faster and faster. People's thoughts are getting freer and freer. However, their minds are getting heavier and heavier, and their bodies are also getting more and more tired. Even if a person usually has a lot of emptiness, confusion and bitterness, in the tea-tasting process, his restless heart can get some rare peace.[3]

In addition, the life scenes of literati depicted in the ancient tea poems provide a reference for studying the ancient social style and features and understanding the living conditions of the ancients today. At the same time, it has a certain reference value for modern people's lifestyle. For example, the poet's meeting friends with tea described in the tea poem reminds people that friends can meet and drink tea together instead of drinking alcohol. Poets of the time would drink tea to get rid of sleepiness and stimulate poetics, suggesting that there are healthier ways to refresh oneself than just smoking and drinking. With tea in hand, the poet's heart yearned for happiness, and this scenario of using tea as a metaphor tells everyone what kind of excellent qualities they should have to let their outlook on life and values be elevated in the poetic mood of the tea poem.

Moreover, the traditional tea style, tea art and tea customs described in the tea poems can continue to be passed on as a cultural tradition. Some of the tea skills and techniques described in tea poems, such as giving and whisking tea, can be applied to real life. For example, when drinking tea in a tea house, it is also a pleasure for contemporary people to enjoy the exquisite tea drinking life thousands of years ago by watching such art and technical performances. The relationship between the "Tao" and "utensil" shown in the tea poem is a very important spiritual connotation, which is not only expressed in the understanding of the "Tao", but also in the attitude of man himself towards things. Through the understanding and study of tea poems, one can deeply appreciate the profoundness of Chinese Traditional tea culture, which is of great significance and value in today when traditional culture and foreign culture are constantly colliding.

### **3. THE APPLICATION VALUE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL TEA POEM ELEMENTS IN MODERN TEA PACKAGING DESIGN**

#### ***3.1 Enriching Modern Tea Drinking Life***

Compared to people in ancient times, modern people tend to drink tea in a more simplified procedure, and in a fast-paced life, people tend to pay more attention to practicality and convenience[4]. For example, people use "readily teapots" to make tea, or even directly use tea bags to drink tea. Under such circumstances, the integration of tea poem elements into modern tea packaging can undoubtedly enrich the cultural connotation of tea drinking activities and add culture and fun to modern tea drinking activities. In the process of drinking tea, through the tea packaging to understand the tea poems, people can seem to imagine some of the life scenes of the literati drinking tea described in the poems, and experience the beautiful mood and rhythmic beauty of the language. Although this process may be very short, it is undoubtedly one of the most possible ways and means of poeticizing modern life.

#### ***3.2 Taking Tea Packaging as a Carrier to Help the Development and Inheritance of Traditional Chinese Tea Culture***

Modern society is developing rapidly and efficiency has become a wind vane leading people's modern life. In order to improve efficiency, people began to accept a fast-paced lifestyle and fast food culture is born under this environment. A leisurely and tranquil environment seems to be hard to find in the city, and traditional culture is constantly under attack, facing strong challenges from foreign culture and modern culture. Few modern people, especially the young group today, have the time and conditions to taste and appreciate tea in the same way as the ancients did thousands of years ago, and few are willing to invest the time to understand tea culture in depth. Therefore, if the traditional Chinese tea culture wants to continue to be developed and passed on, new carriers should be constantly developed. Combining tea culture with practical modern tea packaging is one of the ways that people are generally willing to accept.

## 4. THE APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE TEA POEMS IN MODERN PACKAGING DESIGN

### 4.1 Branding of Tea Poem Elements

Despite the expanding scale of the tea market, the tea market still has the problem of serious product homogenization and inability to form differentiation so far. At present, there are many types of tea in China, but there are few tea products that really have high visibility and influence. In order to achieve good economic benefits, tea enterprises must pay attention to the establishment of tea brands and enhance their own brand image. The branding of tea is an inevitable choice for the development of tea enterprises. Taking traditional tea culture as the basis and tea poems as the material to refine relevant concepts and combine with tea brands can increase the cultural connotation of tea brands and enhance the image of tea enterprises[5].

The "Qi Wan" (柒碗, namely, seven bowls) tea brand is derived from the "Song of Seven Bowls of Tea". "柒碗" is homophonic with "七碗", which makes people directly associate with the famous tea poem of Tang Dynasty poet Lu Tong. Tang Dynasty Lu Tong's "Writing Quickly to Thank Meng Court-admonisher t for Sending Me New Tea" is a representative one of tea poems. The

whole poem praises the good color, smell and taste of the new tea sent by the Meng Court-admonisher as well as its role in pleasing the peace of mind or inner tranquility[6]. The poem is composed of four stanzas, the third of which is from "the first bowl wets my throat" to "I only felt the fresh breeze in my armpits", through which the poet's own special feeling about drinking tea is written. This is the most wonderful part of the poem and is also the most delicate touch of the whole poem. Bowl by bowl, the poet writes his specific feelings about drinking tea: the first and second bowls are lightly straightforward narrated — the first bowl wets the throat and the second one breaks the lonely boredom; to the third bowl of tea into the poet's dry intestines, it flows in the belly, searching for an encyclopedic mind. By the fourth bowl, the grievance in the heart naturally volatilizes; the fifth and sixth bowls connect with the aura of the gods. By the seventh bowl, the poet explains that "the seventh bowl is not allowed to be drunk", because if one drinks it, one will take flight to the land of the immortal. The poet, with a rich imagination, through the seven bowls of tea, depicts the seven realms of tea drinking. Therefore, this poem is also called "Song of Seven Bowls of Tea". The meaning of the "Qi Wan" tea brand is precisely the same as what is depicted in the "Song of Seven Bowls of Tea", hoping to find the purest seven realms of tea drinking in the modern fast-paced tea drinking life (see "Figure 1").

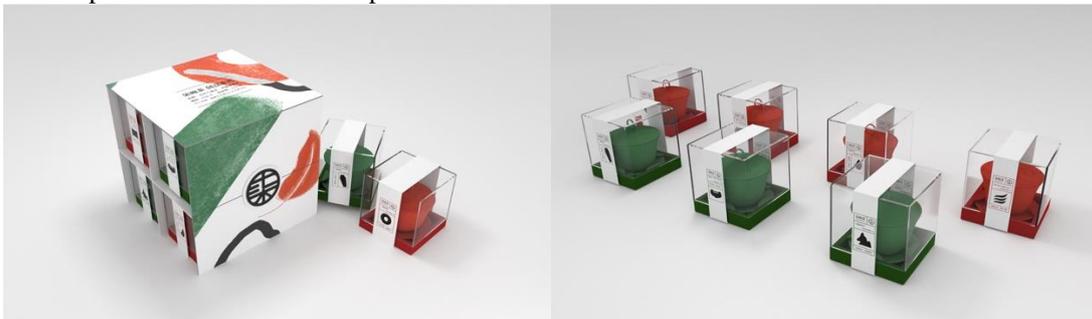


Figure 1 "Qi Wan" brand tea packaging design. (Source: drawn by the author)

### 4.2 Symbolic Extraction of Tea Poem Elements

Tea poems often contain many elements, such as the description of tea art, the depiction of the mood when drinking tea, and the life perception brought by tea drinking, etc. These elements often have a richer cultural connotation and create a poetic atmosphere for tea drinking activities. The addition of these elements in modern tea packaging

design allows for emotional communication and exchange with consumers through tea poems, increasing the good interaction between packaging and users and enhancing the user experience of tea packaging.

In the tea packaging design, the key image in the seven realms of tea drinking in the "Song of Seven Bowls of Tea" is extracted, and the artistic conception conveyed in the poem is transformed into visual symbols by using synaesthesia and

synesthesia (see "Figure 2"). Then, further, the verbalized and abstract verses are transformed into a figurative pattern and applied to the pattern

design of tea packaging. The tea poem is presented in a visual way in the packaging design (see "Figure 3").

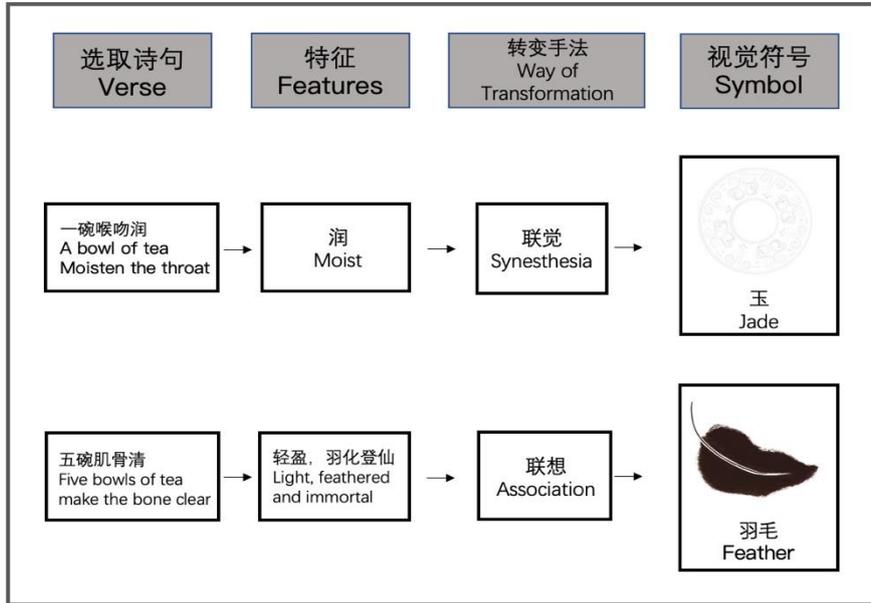


Figure 2 Example of extracting visual elements from "Qi Wan" tea packaging. (Source: drawn by the author)



Figure 3 "Qi Wan" tea outer packaging pattern. (Source: drawn by the author)

### 4.3 The Application of Tea Poem Elements Copywriting

Verses are often the most condensed expression of life and emotions, and each verse of a poem is the most natural and perfect copywriting. The reason why tea poems are classic is because every verse and every word is worth repeated deliberation and aftertaste. It is such condensed verses that give tea poems their unique charm. When people take out each verse of the poem and enjoy it separately, they will find another unique taste.

In the packaging design of the "Qi Wan" tea gift box, each built-in independent packaging has a different verse selected, so that people can read and taste the poem while tasting tea, adding a different small interest when drinking tea and enhancing the interactivity of tea packaging. At the same time, each verse is accompanied by a corresponding interpretation, which can not only enhance people's understanding of the tea poem, but also become a topic of interaction when drinking tea with friends ("Figure 4").



Figure 4 "Qi Wan" tea packaging copywriting application. (Source: drawn by the author)

## 5. CONCLUSION

Through the understanding and analysis of tea poems, people can find that they are inextricably linked with tea culture. In a sense, the Chinese tea culture is expressed in poems. With the understanding and study of tea poems, people can feel the nourishment of traditional culture, borrow some scenes of literati's tea drinking life from the poems, appreciate the poems' wonderful mood and rhythmic beauty of language, cleanse the soul and regulate the lifestyle at the right time. This is undoubtedly a way and method to poeticize contemporary life. In today's diversified tea packaging design, the application of tea poem elements not only meets the aesthetic needs of modern people for product packaging design, but also satisfies the communication and functional requirements of tea product packaging as a carrier of tea culture. The integration of the tea poem cultural elements undoubtedly provides more innovative ideas for tea packaging design. As long as the integration is carried out through effective methods, breakthroughs in design can be achieved.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Tian Liu.

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