

Primitive Charm and Vernacular Vision: A Cross–Aesthetic Analysis of “Naive Taste” in Dali Bai Jiamia Prints

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Abstract

Jiamia art is deeply influenced by the local ethnic minorities' primitive customs and beliefs, creating its unique visual style: an improvisational style that is full of childlike interest. It is now in a difficult situation due to insufficient attention to local folk art, facing the dilemma of being lost and little known. To better protect and pass on the Dali Bai Jiamia, this paper aimed to 1) explore the background and development of the Dali Bai Jiamia culture; 2) analyze the characteristics of the Dali Bai Jiamia motifs; and 3) analyze the visual style of the Dali Bai Jiamia, which was “Naive Taste.” The data collection tools were a literature review and a field survey. Combined with Wölfflin's theory of formal analysis, the researchers sorted out the historical origin of the Dali Bai Jiamia, summarized its production and usage, and systematically explored and analyzed its unique “Naive Taste” visual style. The results of the study were as follows: 1) Jiamia culture had a long history, and it was used to satisfy the needs of the Dali Bai people's inner beliefs; 2) Jiamia had unique pattern characteristics, where the generation of the pattern was closely related to the cultural bearer and the embodiment of cultural values; and 3) Jiamia featured a “Naive Taste” visual style, which could provide a continuous source of inspiration for other arts. These research findings trace the history, pattern characteristics, and distinctive visual style of Jiamia, laying the groundwork for the preservation and inheritance of Jiamia cultural heritage. They simultaneously demonstrate the multifaceted potential of traditional culture as both an inspiration and a cultural vehicle within contemporary artistic creation.

Keywords: Dali Bai Jiamia; Intangible cultural heritage; Cultural preservation; Pattern characteristics

Introduction

As a famous cultural site in Yunnan Province, Dali has a special geographic location. Due to the complex terrain and landscape, the social development was once lagging, which has led to the protection and continuation of many intangible cultural heritage programs in the Dali region. Intangible cultural heritage not only serves as a symbol of national identity but also deepens national identity and enhances cultural soft power (Zhang et al., 2024). Jياما, as a general term for all kinds of engraved prints used to be burned in Chinese folk religious ceremonies, is one of the original arts with the longest history, the simplest style, and the widest application in ancient Chinese prints. It is the crystallization of the inheritance accumulated by the labor of countless folk artists for thousands of years. It is the spiritual support of the Bai people, who aspire to a better life, hope to convey their wishes through it, and expect it to be realized (Figure 1). Jياما culture is now facing challenges such as transmission faults, loss of skills, and lack of markets, and it is particularly urgent and necessary to pass on and protect Jياما as an intangible cultural heritage (Gao et al., 2024).



Figure 1 Dali Bai Jياما (Source: Chinese woodblock prints collection' Yunnan Jياما volume)

Influenced by historical development and regional folk culture, Jياما culture encompasses a rich and vast array of themes and subjects, featuring a distinctive visual style. The earliest Jياما boards were primarily carved by local villagers who lacked formal artistic training. Consequently, the patterns appear remarkably simple, with lines unconstrained by rigid conventions. This approach to composition and stylistic form represents a manifestation of naive art. Naïve art exerts a powerful emotional impact on viewers through its simplified forms, colors, and intuitive compositions (Shtets & Melnyk, 2025). The concepts behind Jياما creations originate from Dali. As a significant emblem of Bai ethnic culture in Yunnan, Jياما patterns embody profound historical and cultural contexts alongside folk beliefs (Huang, 2024). Inheriting this folk art is also a way of passing on and continuing the historical stories, ideas, culture, and values of the Bai people.

To better preserve the Dali Bai Jiamas' Jiamas' culture, researchers have systematically traced its historical origins, summarized its development and applications, and analyzed its visual style. This work lays a solid foundation for safeguarding the historical value of Jiamas' culture and its distinctive "naive taste" visual aesthetic, while also providing enduring aesthetic inspiration for contemporary artistic creation and visual culture studies.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the background and development of the Dali Bai Jiamas' culture.
2. To analyze the pattern characteristics of the Dali Bai Jiamas'.
3. To analyze the visual style of Dali Bai Jiamas' "Naive Taste".

Literature Review

1. Research on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is a new concept in humanity's understanding of cultural heritage and refers to the social practices, representations, expressions, expressions, knowledge, skills, and associated instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups, and sometimes individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

The United States is currently developing the development of cultural resources, and the role of intangible cultural heritage in urban development is becoming more and more obvious (Buckley & Graves, 2016). With the continuous development of tourism, foreign research on the combination of intangible cultural heritage and tourism, as well as the spatial distribution of resources, has been carried out (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2019), and some countries in South America are attempting to combine them to create cultural tourism projects with local characteristics (Nahuelhual et al., 2014).

China's intangible cultural heritage unites the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation's industriousness and wisdom, and has extremely important historical and cultural values. Such cultural treasures, passed on orally and from generation to generation, provide a sense of national identity and continuity, thus enhancing respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (Zhang et al., 2024). Jiamas' culture is now facing challenges such as transmission faults, loss of skills, and lack of markets, and it is particularly urgent and necessary to pass on and protect Jiamas' as an intangible cultural heritage (Gao et al., 2024).

2. Research on the Dali Bai Jiamā in the international context

Jiamā culture is rooted in traditional Chinese folk culture with a deep historical heritage, and is a collective term for woodcut prints used in folk culture for ritual activities such as praying for good luck and avoiding disasters (Gao et al., 2024). The use of Jiamā is more popular and centralized in Yunnan Province, and in other provinces it is known as Zhima, Shenma, Shenlingma, and Guiren, which are widely spread throughout the region (Kawano, 2010). The Dali Bai Jiamā blends deities from Buddhism, Taoism, and the Benzhu beliefs that are unique to the Bai people. During the Cultural Revolution, Jiamā was considered a product of “feudal superstition” and its sale and use were banned (Lily, 2020). However, the craftsmen and some villagers managed to preserve some of the Jiamā plates and Jiamā paper, and after the end of the turmoil, the craftsmen re-engraved the Jiamā based on the old patterns.

The main problems in the inheritance and protection of Jiamā can be summarized in several aspects: firstly, the production methods are passed on orally by craftsmen, which is not conducive to dissemination in the Internet environment; secondly, the publicity methods of Jiamā basically use static communication methods such as exhibitions, which makes it difficult to publicize it in a wider scope (Gao et al., 2024); and finally, the patterns of Jiamā, although rich in cultural connotations and religious symbols, have limited application in modern product design (Huang, 2024).

The “Jiamā” pattern carries the history, culture, connotation and religious beliefs of the Bai people, and its rough and childish visual style is more visually appealing (Huang, 2024). If expanding and deepening the stylistic study of Jiamā could usher in a new phase of research in the field of folk art, focusing on the historical origins of the Jiamā pattern and its important role in traditional Bai festivals, as well as having an impact on ethnic identity and cultural inheritance (Huang, 2025), the results of this research would be rich in important academic value and practical significance.

3. The style of naïve art

Naïve Taste Art, also known as “Folk Art” or “Primitivism”, is one of the unique art genres that blends emotion and communication. This style of art breaks the boundaries of academic norms and professional techniques, and directly presents the artist’s personal emotional experience and way of thinking, using simplified illustrations, bright colors, and spontaneous compositions, which can be mapped to the deeper archetypes of the human cognitive world, and bring a strong emotional impact to the viewer (Shtets & Melnyk, 2025). In academia, naïve art is seen as a

phenomenon that encompasses a multitude of histories and variants that have arisen in different historical cultures. Thus, similar aesthetic principles can be traced in primitivism, folk art, intuitive art, rough art, and so on (Selivachov, 2022).

The concept of “naïve art” was popularized by the French artist Henri Rousseau. Despite his lack of academic education, Rousseau produced stunning paintings that were free of artistic standards and filled with a sense of nature and purity (KyivGallery, 2023). This is also reflected in the works of Matisse, a representative of the Fauvist school, who used rich and bright colors in his pictures and used color combinations to convey honest and pure emotions, in pursuit of a pure, naïve, and undemonstrative art. Matisse believed that the choice of colors was not based on any scientific theory, but on his observation (Henri, 2013).

People’s respect for this unique style is closely related to the exploration of new ways of expression and the pursuit of a return to simplicity, free from the constraints of tradition, and the culture of the Dali Bai Jima is closely linked to the art of naïve.

Conceptual Framework

This article focuses on the formation of the Dali Bai Jima and its unique artistic style. Researchers combined Wolfflin's formal analysis theory to sort out the historical origins, development (Wölfflin 1950), and uses of the Bai ethnic group’s Jima in Dali. They also conducted systematic exploration and analysis of the origin, culture, value, and unique “naïve” visual style of the patterns to determine the conceptual framework of the research (Figure 2).

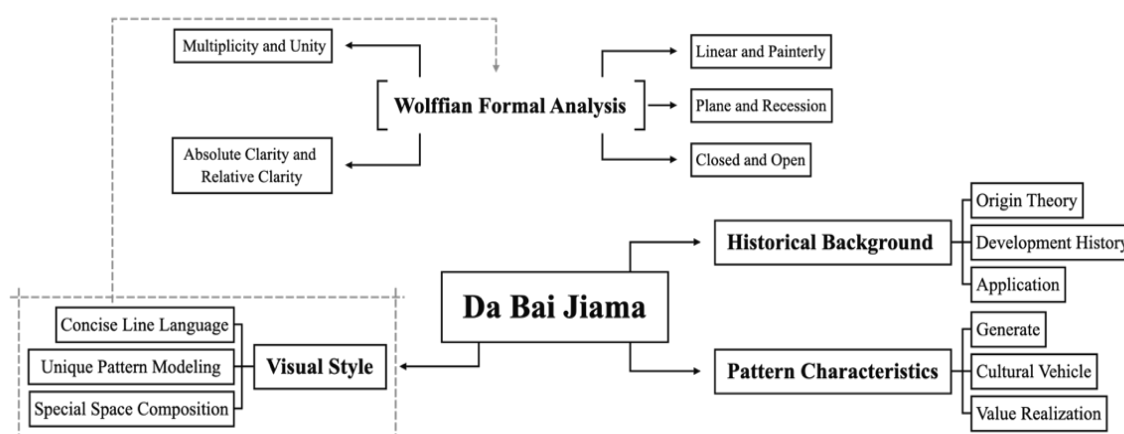


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework (Source: Created by researchers, 2025)

Research Methodology

In this study, researchers used qualitative research methods, including literature review and fieldwork. Through analysis of literature and field research, they systematically sorted out the historical origins of the Bai ethnic group's Jiamā, summarized its origins and uses, and used the Wolflin form analysis theory to explore and summarize the pattern characteristics and unique “naive” visual style of the Bai Jiamā.

1. Literature review

Researchers conducted a literature review based on purposive sampling principles, selecting content directly related to the Dali Bai Jiamā from relevant research papers, books, and publicly available online resources to establish the theoretical and historical foundation for the study. The collected literature was analyzed and studied, and relevant concepts were defined to form a conceptual framework. This framework encompasses the historical and social functions of Jiamā, the meanings of Jiamā patterns, their visual styles, and their artistic value.

STEP 1: Researchers conduct keyword searches in academic databases to retrieve journal articles, dissertations, and conference papers relevant to the research topic. Concurrently, they supplement their findings through additional consultations of websites, ethnographic materials, and pertinent historical documents to enrich the historical context and cultural lineage of the Jiamā culture.

STEP 2: Organize the literature based on the research questions, categorize and summarize the literature by theme, and identify the consensus, points of contention, and research gaps in existing studies.

STEP 3: By cross-referencing different types of literature, the researcher constructed the theoretical framework for this study, providing direction and reference for subsequent field investigations. This ensures consistency in conceptual definitions and data sources throughout the research.

2. Fieldwork

Researchers conducted field investigations in Dali Prefecture, selecting representative Bai ethnic villages and cultural sites that still preserve Jia Ma cultural practices as survey locations. Through photographs, videos, and direct textual documentation, they observed and recorded Dali Bai Jiamā traditions, gathering firsthand data to understand specific transmission practices, pattern characteristics, and symbolic meanings.

STEP 1: Researchers identify culturally representative villages, streets, museums, and workshops as primary survey sites through literature review and consultation with relevant institutions. They then develop a survey plan that includes key observation points and documentation protocols.

STEP 2: Researchers directly document observations in the field using photographs, videos, and written records to ensure data integrity and traceability. The scope of investigation includes the tools, materials, and methods used to produce Jiama; the patterns and characteristics of Jiama; their usage contexts, meanings, frequency of use; and associated folk practices.

STEP 3: Following the fieldwork, researchers synthesize and compare data from various sources, extracting and summarizing key insights to ensure findings are grounded in authentic, reliable, and representative primary materials. This process lays the foundation for subsequent analytical work.

Research Results

The results of this study explore the background and development of the Dali Bai Jiama culture

1. Historical Background of the Dali Bai Jiama

Dali is a place with a long history and culture, dating back to the Tang and Song dynasties. Among the various ethnic groups in Yunnan, the Bai's historical consciousness is particularly strong, and the historical records are especially rich. The Dali Bai Jiama, as a form of folk art, is an indispensable cultural accumulation, and its generation, development, and evolution are closely related to the geographic environment and folklore of the Dali Bai.

Dali Bai Jiama from the form of a painting art form of woodblock prints, from the use of functional point of view, it is used for local folk praying for blessings and sacrifices and other ritual activities used to burn or post, offerings, printed with a variety of gods and ghosts, natural scenery, birds and animals, such as graphic handmade woodblock prints of the general term. In Dali Bai Jiama, use and function, in addition to the bridge of communication between man and God, a belief in the exchange of tools, more is to give a person's soul a desire, a solace.

The question of when the Jiama came into widespread use among the Bai people has always been controversial. Most people believe it was introduced around the Tang Dynasty and has been in use ever since; some scholars believe that the Jiama existed as early as the Han and Jin Dynasties. However, both sides agree that Jiama began in the Ming Dynasty (Lily, 2020).

There are various theories about the origin of Jياما, but they are summarized as the following two main ones:

1.1 Importation of Chinese culture

Yunnan Province is close to many regions, including Dali, and is at the crossroads. After the Han and Jin dynasties, due to various reasons, many Han migrated to Yunnan. As part of the Han culture, Jياما was also introduced to the Dali Bai Jياما area of Yunnan, and gradually popularized among the folk. In addition, because a large number of roads in Yunnan were very rugged, transportation was often carried out with the help of horses, and the horse gangs formed in the process became the most important means of transportation at that time, and the horse culture of keeping, loving and respecting horses was formed and developed continuously (Kawano, 2010), and Jياما became a material carrier for the continuation of the horse culture by borrowing the horse to pray for blessings and avoiding calamities in the rituals.

1.2 Religious and cultural intermingling

Religious culture is an important carrier for the prosperity and circulation of Jياما. First, when productivity was low, people believed that everything had a spirit, and ritual activities such as sacrificing to the sun, moon, and heaven and earth were prevalent in folklore, so that human beings achieved spiritual harmony with nature, and the Jياما became an important carrier for its transmission. Secondly, after Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism were introduced into Dali, the deities of the three religions were reflected in the Dali Bai Jياما and intermingled, and the worship of many gods enriched the content of the Jياما. Finally, the belief of the Bai Benzhu adds national characteristics to the Jياما. Benzhu faith and Jياما are closely related, and their ideological roots originate from ancient ghost worship, which is the material carrier for the Bai people to pray to the gods for luck and avoid disasters.

2. The Development of the Dali Bai Jياما

Since its emergence, the Bai Jياما has gone through five phases: Gradual formation, Maturity and local development, Rapid development, Stagnation development, and a period of Recovery (Figure 3).

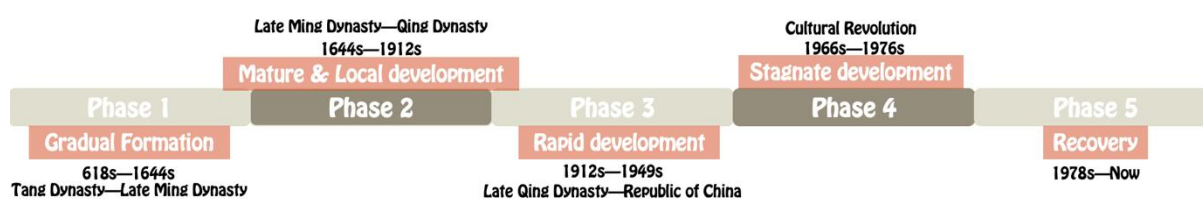


Figure 3 Timeline of Jياما's development (Source: Constructed by the author)

Phase 1: The period of Gradual Formation, about 380 to 1406 years ago, Tang Dynasty to the late Ming Dynasty. Jياما was first made and used in areas where Han people were concentrated, and with the introduction of Han culture and the fusion of ethnic and cultural exchanges, the Bai forefathers gradually began to use it, and when they used it more, they began to imitate it and fused the unique Benzhu beliefs of the Bai people into it.

Phase 2: The period of Mature & Local Development, about 112 to 380 years ago, late Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. Jياما is more local in content and form, with the unique Bai people's belief in Benzhu dominating. Few local craftsmen were making Jياما during this period, but more and more people used and believed in them.

Phase 3: The period of Rapid Development, about 72 to 112 years ago, late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China. In the 1950s, scholars began to pay attention to and collect. Jياما wide range of uses, many types, for almost every family throughout the year, very good sales, often sold out during the day and night printing, which is the most prosperous period of Jياما's development. Dali can see that the oldest version of the Jياما woodblock was completed during this period. Nowadays, most of the Jياما used by the people are reproduced according to the Jيامา paper or woodblock left from this period.

Phase 4: The period of Stagnate Development, about 48 to 58 years ago, Cultural Revolution. Jياما was regarded as a product of feudal superstition. Many Jياما were burned, the Jيامา woodblock was taken away, and the folk also prohibited the use of Jياما; the villagers could only use it secretly. Craftspeople to inherit the craft secretly hide some of the other can only be carved from memory.

Phase 5: The period from about 46 years ago to now is the period of recovery. State policies have changed, ethnic and folk cultures that were banned during the Cultural Revolution have been restored, and religious beliefs, ethnic beliefs, and traditional cultures have been recognized and protected. In 1982 and 1985, two scholars published articles that officially launched the study of Jياما culture in academia. In 2004, the Chinese Folk Association went to Dali to guide the rescue of folk cultural heritage. In 2009, Dali Bai Jياما was listed as an intangible heritage project.

The results of this study analyzed the pattern characteristics of the Dali Bai Jiamia from the three aspects of pattern generation, cultural bearing, and cultural value.

1. Generation of the Dali Bai Jiamia pattern

Due to the influence of historical development and regional folk culture, it covers a rich and huge range of subjects, so its image symbols cover a wide range of categories, such as iconic cultural symbols, religious symbols, symbols of artistic modeling elements, symbols of words, symbols of deities and so on.

Dali Bai Jiamia and people's daily life needs are closely linked to the people's daily life in many psychological beliefs in the Jiamia, and need to be reflected in the production of what is needed to live, and the Jiamia needs to reflect what is needed. Such as people's food, clothing, housing, and transportation, production life cannot be separated from the road, bridge, or livestock, so there is a road god, a bridge god, a cattle god, horse god Jiamia, people pray for the wind and the rain on the god of the water god, the dragon god and other Jiamia.

1.1 Nature Revelation

Among the many patterns of the Dali Bai Jiamia, there is a wide range of subjects for patterns about nature. For example, the god of wood, the god of wind, the god of thunder, and so on. This is because in the primitive society period, due to the low productivity, the natural elements would make the Bai forefathers feel mysterious and unpredictable. In this case, for the unlimited power of nature is completely in a state of submission, it produces the nature worship of all things that have spirit. The Benzhu faith of the Bai people originated from the nature worship and totem worship in the primitive society period.

Benzhu faith is a religious belief that goes hand in hand with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and it is also a special belief of the Bai people that differs from that of other ethnic groups. In the Dali area, almost every village has a belief in Benzhu, and some villages worship a tree or a stone as Benzhu. Through this folk belief, people try to influence and dominate these supernatural forces.

1.2 Artificial Designs

The patterns of the Dali Bai Jiamia are closely related to people's daily needs, which are reflected in the Jiamia, such as the "Field Goddess" Jiamia, which blesses the crops, the "Six Livestock King" Jiamia, which blesses the livestock with healthy survival, etc. The patterns of the Jiamia also change with the changes in the local living environment. For example, when wells

were sealed, the “Well God” Jiamā was posted, but with the popularization of piped water, the number of households using well water has gradually decreased, and the use of the well god Jiamā has become less and less common.

People’s needs in their daily lives are mainly reflected in the following three aspects: (1) the hope for family inheritance, longevity and health of relatives and family members; (2) a life of food and clothing; and (3) freedom from disasters and harm in the agricultural affairs of the Jiamā and the safety of livestock, which are also evident in the patterns of the Jiamā. These motifs not only reflect mankind’s desire for survival and continuity, but also show mankind’s desire to possess the resources for survival, and show that some of the Jiamā patterns were created precisely by the human factors of the makers and users of the time.

2. The Cultural Bearing of Dali Bai Jiamā Patterns

As a product of its time, the art of the Dali Bai Jiamā was created under the interplay of natural, cultural, and generational factors, which are equally important to the formation of the Jiamā pattern. Geographical conditions can sometimes play a role in demarcating the boundaries of different cultures, especially in a region with many ethnic minorities, such as Yunnan, where natural geographical conditions can affect the interaction of cultures. In the creation of Jiamā, in the face of foreign cultures, while adhering to their own traditional customs and art forms, they also absorb new things that are beneficial to them.

The pattern of the Dali Bai Jiamā has undergone many changes and evolutions with the passage of time. The Jiamā carved at different times have many modifications in the pattern, especially in the decorative patterns and details, such as the “Moon Palace” Jiamā collected by Ding Daxian in the 1980s and the “Moon Palace” Jiamā collected by the author in 2024 (Table 1). There is a clear difference. This is because the patterns of Jiamā have changed with the changes of the times, things, and cultures, and are no longer bound by the craftsmen of the previous generations and the times.

Table 1 Comparison of Jياما patterns from different year

Sample Name	Sample Image	Sample Year
"Moon Palace" Jياما		1980
"Moon Palace" Jياما		2024
"Koushe Shifei" Jياما		1986
"Koushe Shifei" Jياما		2006

3. The Value of Dali Bai Jياما Patterns

3.1 Folk cultural values

Traditional Chinese culture is dominated by the spirit of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and is compatible with various schools of thought, which complement and reinforce each other. Therefore, traditional Chinese culture is both pluralistic and harmonious.

The Dali Bai Jياما regulates the relationship between people and people as well as between people and nature. Jياما's beliefs emerged based on traditional Chinese culture, and then selected information was combined with Bai culture to form a unique style and culture. Among the types of deities in the Bai's unique Benzhu worship is the Buddhist Benzhu, which is two different beliefs from Buddhism, although some of the deities have the same name. The appearance of Buddhist figures in Benzhu worship reflects the acceptance and integration of Buddhist culture into Benzhu culture, which is a process of enriching, perfecting, and upgrading Benzhu culture.

3.2 Humanistic spiritual value

The pattern of Dali Bai Jياما originated from the folk and belongs to the public, reflecting the folk's affirmation of the existence of life as the core, and reflecting the folk's strong

vision of the pursuit of life and simple life. Jiama's patterns always present a kind of harmony between man and nature, and they respect the wisdom passed down from the ancestors and keep the excellent part of it to continue to inherit. And at the same time, they are actively involved in and understand life, to recognize and grasp some wisdom of life refined by life.

The Dali Bai Jiama integrates folk activities such as rituals and prayers for blessings, and it embodies people's beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. The Jiama is still used by many villagers, showing the charm of the Jiama culture, which is full of the historical and cultural comforting role of the Dali Bai Jiama people, and shows the spiritual cohesion of the Dali Bai Jiama.

The results of this study analyze Jiama's “naïve” visual style in terms of its concise lines, unique shape, and special spatial composition.

Pursuing the true nature of art and the true heart of art, observing the world with childlike innocence, and creating with childlike freedom are the goals pursued by many art masters in ancient and modern times and at home and abroad. Jiama craftsmen create Jiama according to their own observations and feelings. The boldness of the picture, the roughness of the modeling, focusing on the combination of dots, lines and surfaces and the contrast between black and white; the composition is generally full, leaving little white, ignoring perspective, there is no spatial relationship between near and far; the use of powerful strokes, the rich and varied knife, and the pursuit of the object in the picture of the performance of the integrity of the Jiama is a major feature of the Dali Bai Jiama.

1. Concise line language

Line is the most expressive and emotional element in Jiama's works. The creative moment knife is used casually and variably on the woodblock, giving Jiama's works a variation of reality and emptiness. Sometimes several lines are glued together in the carving, which makes the lines have changes in thickness and produces a contrast between lines and surfaces. For example, in “Xishen” Jiama (Figure 4) and “Xuanwu” Jiama (Figure 5), the changes in thickness of the lines, the intersection of lines and surfaces, and the black color of the large surfaces make the Jiama a little thicker and heavier, and produce a vivid contrast of dots, lines, and surfaces.

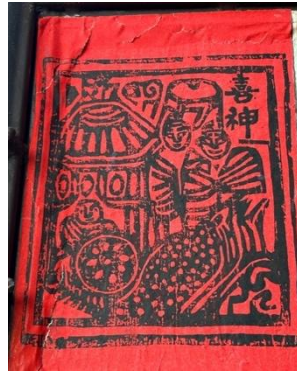


Figure 4 “Happiness God” Jiama (Source: By the Author, 2024)



Figure 5 “Xuanwu” Jiama (Source: By the Author, 2024)

The city of Wuxi in Jiangsu Province also has a traditional culture with the same function, which is called “Zhima” by the local people. Wuxi Zhima is mainly used for the rich and noble families, with bright colors, character shaping more curves, rounded and smooth lines, rich changes, details of clothing should also be carved in place, to be natural and unrestrained, agile and flowing with the line of technology to portray a vivid picture. The Yunnan Jiama is mainly used for folk ritual activities, with more use of dry straight lines, concise and generalized; all the “lines” of the movement are in the service of the image, which is used to refine the image of the object as a means. For example, Wuxi paper horses and Jiama paper horses are also used to expel evil spirits and drive away demons, as well as to protect the emperor Wenchang, who is used to bless the success of education, but the difference in style between Wuxi Zhima and Yunnan Jiama can be clearly seen (Table 2).

Table 2 Differences between Dali Jiamā and Wuxi Zhima

Sample Name	Sample Source	Sample Image	Sample Extraction	Sample Style
"Five Road Gods" "Jiamā"	Wuxi Zhima			Meticulous and Smooth
"Five Road Gods" "Jiamā"	Yunnan Jiamā			Simple and Casual
"Wenchang Dijun" Jiamā	Wuxi Zhima			Meticulous and Smooth
"Wenchang Dijun" Jiamā	Yunnan Jiamā			Simple and Casual

2. Unique pattern modeling

The modeling of Dali Bai Jiamā's art is not subject to any objective factors such as perspective ratio, anatomy, structure, etc., and the works look more casual and freer. When shaping images, Jiamā craftsmen do not simply copy the visual image directly, but pursue the honest expression of feelings, relying on their own memories to consider the modeling in their minds repeatedly, and then carve out the artistic effect as they wish, showing the natural and simple characteristics with exaggerated and generalized techniques. In this way, the subjective creation based on the understanding of things, to achieve the purpose of expressive expression, so the image presented is generally in the "like and unlike between".

Exaggeration is one of the most important means of characterizing objects in the Dali Bai Jiamā, capturing the main features and omitting the minor ones. For example, in the "Dragon King" Jiamā, the image of the dragon is simplified, but it can still be recognized by the iconic dragon head and scales on the body (Figure 6). Many of the figures in the Jiamā patterns have

only a rough outline of their faces, such as the “Snowy Mountains Niangniang” Jiamā (Figure 7), which creates a form of art with abbreviated images and rough lines, but this image would not be mistaken for a person with a disability. The omission of modeling is justified in people's minds, and people are not surprised by the way Jiamā is taken out of the picture.



Figure 6 “Dragon King” Jiamā (Source: By Tian Chen Weiding, 2005)



Figure 7 “Xueshan Niangniang” Jiamā (Source: By the Yang Yusheng, 2001)

3. Special space composition

The spatial composition of Dali Bai Jiamā is not the same as the focal point perspective of Western paintings, but follows the scattered perspective composition of traditional Chinese paintings. The painter's point of observation is not fixed in one place, but is not limited by the field of view, moving the foothold for observation, and what can be seen from different footholds can be added to the picture. The artist can freely depict up and down, left and right while painting, and the viewer can also freely view. This “moving point of view” is also known as “scattered perspective”.

“Fullness” is another characteristic of the composition of Dali Bai Jiamā images, but this ‘fullness’ does not make people feel congested. While pursuing “fullness”, the maker utilizes a large white background to obtain the contrast between “fullness” and “emptiness”. The main

characters are painted very large, and the secondary characters are painted smaller, forming a contrast between large and small, suggesting the level and space of the plane. This composition makes the picture both generous and whole, both full and full.

Discussions

This study explores the origin and uses of the Dali Bai Jiamia and analyzes the pattern characteristics and expressive style of the Dali Bai Jiamia.

Jiamia, in the historical development of absorbing a lot of foreign culture, especially by the Han culture, brought the influence of the fusion of their own national culture, and gradually formed the current national characteristics of the Dali Bai Jiamia. Jiamia has a wide range of uses, and people's daily lives, in which many psychological beliefs can be reflected in the needs of a wide range of pattern content.

The visual style of the Dali Bai Jiamia embodies “creative freedom” and achieves harmony and unity in many aspects, such as spirit and material, practicality and aesthetics. When creating images, Jiamia artists do not simply copy visual images, but focus on expressing their inner emotions and creating Jiamia freely. They often use exaggerated and generalized techniques to show natural and simple characteristics. Combining Wolfflin’s formal analysis theory, we can analyze the concise, spontaneous, generalizing, exaggerated, and unique visual style of Dali Bai Jiamia.

New Knowledge from Research

This study systematically sorts out the historical origins of the Dali Bai Jiamia, summarizes its origins and uses, and explores and analyzes its unique “naive taste” visual style. Based on this research, a new knowledge framework has been constructed. The Dali Bai Jiamia evolved through five developmental stages, rooted in theories tracing its origins to the introduction of Central Plains Han culture and religious syncretism. As a cultural vessel intertwining natural, cultural, and generational elements, it embodies dual values of folk tradition and humanistic spirit. Employing a concise language of dots, lines, and planes, the Jiamia employs exaggerated, generalized, and free-form modeling techniques. Combined with scattered-point perspective and distinctive compositional aesthetics, it creates an art form characterized by naive yet vivid expression and a unique folk artistic style. (Figure 8):

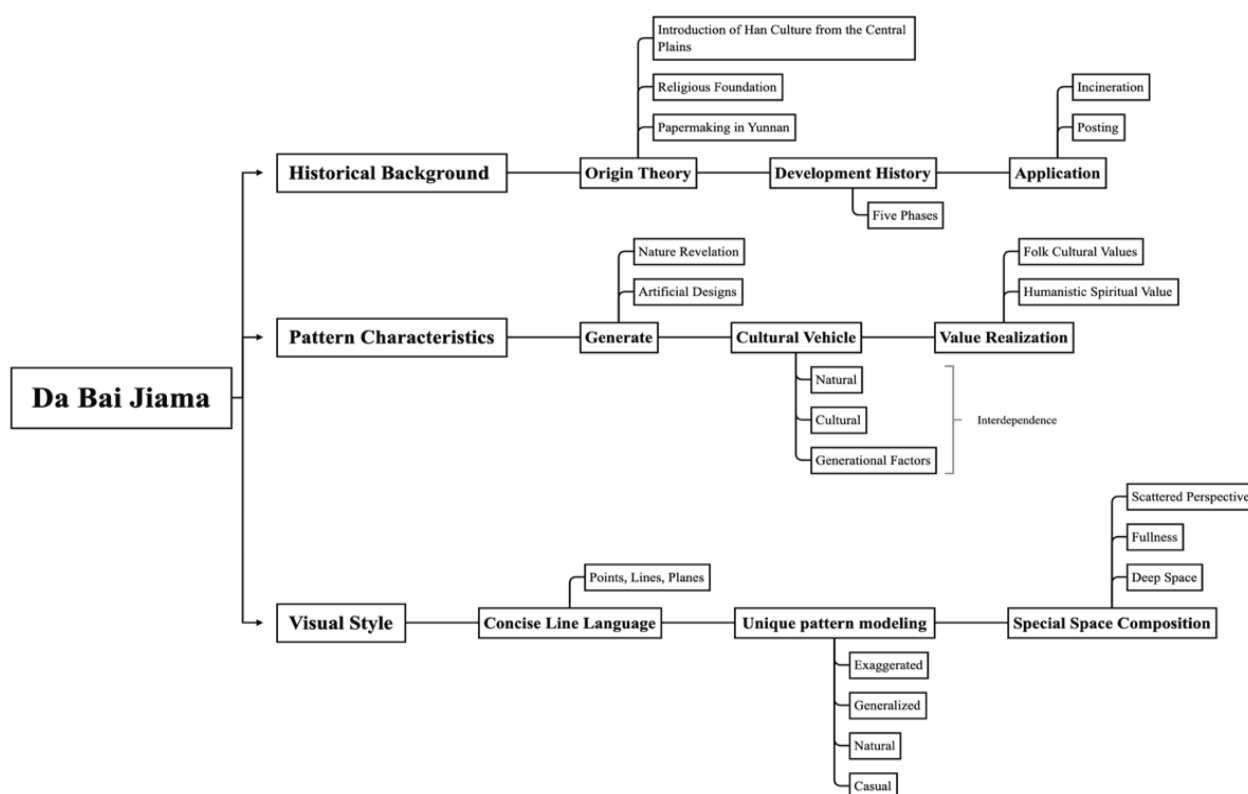


Figure 8 Dali Bai Jiaoma Knowledge Framework (Source: Created by researchers, 2025)

Conclusion

Dali Bai Jiaoma prints are flexible in their expression, with a wide range of materials, and there is often no strict hierarchical separation of deities, which in turn adds a unique flavor. This kind of unrestricted, free-spirited creativity and imagination is exactly what is missing in artistic creation.

Decrees cannot create fun, nor can rulers force fun on people. Fun can only leap out of the idea of new life and can only be cultivated by education and true values thickly gathered and deeply cultivated. Jiaoma are created and handed down by the people out of the need for spiritual and cultural life, and have social and artistic value. Although these works with “naive taste” visual style seem simple and crude, they are the root of human aesthetic creation, which is not only in line with the basic needs of the people, but also in line with the pursuit of modern art to return to the basics.

An important goal of artistic research and practice is to return to human authenticity and liberate human nature. Organizing and analyzing the historical background of Dali Bai Jiaoma and its “naive taste” visual style can lay the foundation for better protection and inheritance of this

culture. It can also provide artists with a continuous source of inspiration and enlightenment, breaking through the limitations of creation and thus better completing artistic practice.

Suggestions

1. This article summarizes the origins and development of Jiamia. To further protect and preserve traditional culture, the government should increase its support for Jiamia-related research. At the same time, it can also use digital platforms and new media technology to expand the influence of Jiamia culture and promote its wider dissemination.

2. This article systematically explores the unique “naive taste” visual style of the Dali Bai Jiamia, which also provides a continuous source of inspiration and enlightenment for other arts. The colors, shapes, compositions, and concepts of Jiamia in folk culture influence us in every way. The “creative freedom” manifested in its shapes provides a reference point for folk art in similar circumstances, that is, actively expanding the art form of “free creation.”

3. Although this study analyzed Dali Bai Jiamia in conjunction with “Wolfflin’s formal analysis theory,” Jiamia has rich and vast content and a wide range of image symbol categories. Future research can continue to use Wolfflin’s formal analysis theory or combine it with more theories to deepen the study of Jiamia culture.

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