

On the Creative Design of Chinese Characters Centering on Compound characters

Zhao Yueyang^{1*}, Cao Tingting²

Abstract

Compound characters refer to a new form of characters created through the combination of two or more characters, that is, characters created by making use of the visual relationships between various characters and the symbiotic relationships between strokes, thus skillfully integrating familiar characters and symbols to create a new sense of unfamiliarity. compound characters are highly malleable and are with unique cultural values, historical values and artistic values. They have provided excellent design elements for the modern design of Chinese characters design and the philosophy of “turning many into one” reflected in compound characters is of referential value for modern designers. Therefore, this paper aims to explore how compound characters can be used so that more diversified character images can be developed from Chinese characters in the modern context and to explore effective ideas of design. This paper first investigates the concept of compound characters and discusses their characters and types of visual composition. On that basis, by studying the application cases of compound characters in modern design, this paper discusses the application of compound characters in the innovative design of Chinese characters, as well as ideas of design ideas.

Keyword : Compound characters; Chinese Characters; Design of Chinese Characters

1. Introduction

Compound characters are a product of design created through the combination of Chinese characters in Chinese history, which contains the traditional aesthetic thoughts of China and the wisdom of the Chinese nation. In order to convey information more vividly and effectively, Chinese people have been conducting creative exploration of design with Chinese characters as the basic visual elements. So to speak, this kind of exploration have been continuously conducted from ancient times to the present [1]. As a unique cultural symbol in China, compound characters are traditionally presented in such carriers as calligraphy, paper-cut, ceramics, embroidery and weaving. Not only do they have the advantage of synergy between the form and the meaning, they are also of great value for historical, artistic and cultural research values. As valuable resources of design, compound characters are highly expressive [2].

1 Department of Visual Design, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea [Graduate Student]
e-mail: 18637453366@163.com (Corresponding author)

2 Department of Visual Design, Dongseo University, Busan, Korea [Graduate Student]
e-mail: caotingting416@gmail.com

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The application and dissemination of compound characters in modern life can add interest to people's modern life, and is also a way to spread traditional culture [3]. Compound characters will surely show a strong vitality if they are known, understood and applied afresh in contemporary visual design. Nowadays, as the design of Chinese characters is in the ascendant, they have also provided ideas for the innovation, integration and development of Chinese characters, making the worth further explorations and promotion. Therefore, the research objective of this paper is to explore the characteristics of compound characters based on the concept of compound characters and through a combination with practical cases, thus finding the effective design ideas about the modern application and design of Chinese characters. This paper aims to break the shackles of the times, and make compound characters more in line with the aesthetics of this age, thus making contributions to the application of compound characters and the innovative design of modern Chinese characters.

The research subject of this paper is the application of traditional compound characters in the modern design of Chinese characters. The research methods are as follows: this paper first investigates the concept and the characteristics of traditional compound characters and discusses the classification of their visual compositions. It then studies some cases in which compound characters are creatively used in modern design. This paper conducts case studies in three categories, respectively the compound characters combining Chinese characters, those combining Chinese characters with numbers and those combining Chinese characters with English. Finally, by case analysis, this paper explores the characteristics of compound characters in modern design and explains the effective design ideas reflected therein.

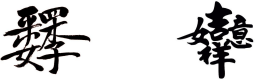
2. Theoretical Background

Compound characters, which generally refer to the characters created through the combination of two or more characters, are a concept relative to "single characters" [4]. The core in the design of compound characters is the concept of combining [5]. That is, the combination of multiple writing elements, which is a reasonable application of concentrated thinking. Compound characters can be traced back to the runes used in ancient China to dispatch troops and the incantations used in Taoism, which reflected the will of the ruling class and religions [6]. Later, since the Song Dynasty, they became part of the auspicious culture among folk people and were also referred to as unity characters and auspicious characters [7]. With the prosperity of the commodity economy, people began to combine auspicious characters and phrases into one character, thus expressing the good wishes of pursuing good fortune and avoiding disasters. Through the skillful combination of multiple characters, new writing symbols were

visually created, thus increasing the unfamiliarly and artistry. In terms of the content, meanings of characters are connected, thus vividly reproducing the meanings contained in the characters. Some scholars believe that compound characters should be attributed to the ways how the structures of Chinese characters have evolved. For example, Y. F. Li proposed a way of the structure evolution of Chinese characters, namely the coinages through new folk customs, and included compound characters into it [8]. D. Q. Jin held that compound characters were part of the auspicious culture of China [9].

Traditional compound characters stress the sense of symmetry and the balance in their glyph. The content is mostly four-character idioms which are often placed in such media as circles and rhombuses [10]. There are varied ways to compose compound characters, and the most commonly used technique is to integrate independent characters by simplifying their strokes. The structures are arranged in the following ways. The bilaterally symmetric type means that the characters are distributed in a bilateral symmetry. The surrounding type is often used to evenly distribute the characters of four-character idioms on four sides. the stroke-simplifying type is often used in vertical composing, in which the strokes at the joints are shared by different characters, thus writing the characters at one stretch. in the intersecting type, different characters intersect one another and are deeply integrated. [Table 1] shows different traditional ways to compose compound characters.

[Table 1] Ways to compose traditional compound Chinese characters

Types of Composition	Example
The bilaterally Symmetric Type	
The surrounding Type	
The stroke-simplifying Type	
The intersecting Type	

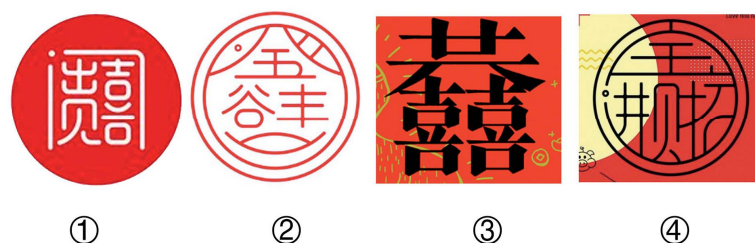
3. Cases of applying compound characters in modern design

3.1. Design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters

Example ① is Chu Men Jian Xi (出門見喜, going out and seeing happy events) in which three characters, Chu (出, going out), Jian (見, seeing) and Xi (喜, happy events) are put inside the character

Men (門, door), thus creating a semi-surrounding image. The content of example ② is Wu Gu Feng Deng (五谷丰登, producing good harvests), which is composed in a way similar to Example ①, that is, putting three characters, Wu (五, five), Gu (谷, grains) and Feng (丰, bumper) are put inside another character, Deng (登, ripeness). Example ③ is Gong Xi (恭禧, blessing people with respect and joy), in which the character Xi (禧) is used to replace the radical in the lower half of Gong (恭), thus turning the two characters into one. Example ④ is Zhao Cai Jin Bao (招财進宝, bringing in wealth and treasures), in which some of the radicals of the four characters are integrated with a circle surrounding the characters, and some components of the characters are connected, thus creating a complete round shape. In the example shown here, the compound characters are designed mostly in traditional ways of compound character design, and the shapes, colors and combination methods are with traditional Chinese styles. Fine and rounded line are often used and the contents are mostly four-character idioms traditionally used in Chinese culture to express auspicious meanings.

It's the characteristic of compound characters composed of Chinese characters to be continuous and traditional. Generally speaking, in modern design, compound characters constructed simply with Chinese characters are constructed mostly through the reprocessing and redesign of the original compound characters, which is the embodiment of the cultural continuation of compound characters in the modern context. [Fig. 1] shows compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters. [Table 2] shows the analysis of the design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters.



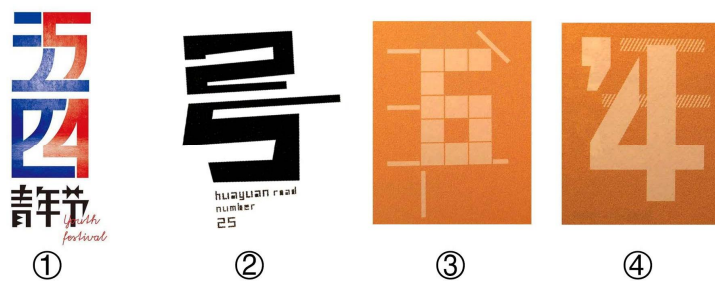
[Fig. 1] Compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters

[Table 2] An analysis of the design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters

Visual forms	The composing methods of traditional compound characters are mostly used Round and square shapes are used The colors are often red, black or yellow
Contents	Four-character idioms used in traditional Chinese culture to express auspicious meanings
Characteristics	Traditional, continuous

3.2. The design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers

Example ① is a compound character designed to commemorate the Youth Day(May 4th), in which common construction relations of the numbers 5 and 4 and the Chinese characters five(五) and four(四) are used, thus blending them through a moderate deformation, and the Chinese characters and the numbers are distinguished with blue and red. Example ② is logo 25 designed by Y. Hu, who managed to create the Chinese character Hao (号) with the numbers 2 and 5. Example ③ and ④ are designs made for the anniversary of Yidong Book store, in which a relationship was built between the numbers 6 and 4 and the Chinese character Nian (年, year), and the numbers were integrated into the Chinese character, thus expressing the commemorative significance of 4 years and 6 years. Compound characters created through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers often make use of the four square characteristic of Chinese characters, and the shapes of numbers are adjusted to square shapes to adapt to the square characters. Secondly, with the help of different colors, the originally independent characters are distinguished, thus enhancing their cognizability of them. The contents are mostly festivals or special occasions and are with commemorative and interesting characteristics. [Fig. 2] shows compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers and [Table 3] shows the analysis of compound character design through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers.



[Fig. 2] Compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers

[Table 3] An analysis of the design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters and numbers

Visual forms	The square shape of Chinese characters are often used and originally independent characters are distinguished through different colors
Contents	Festivals or special occasions
Characteristics	Commemorative and interesting

3.3. The design of Compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters and English

Shuang Xi (囍) is a traditional compound character in China composed of two Xi (喜, happiness), which is often used in weddings. Example ① is an innovative design based on the traditional Shuang Xi, which is composed of two words love arranged vertically. Example ② is a compound character of the Chinese character Yi (藝, art), in which ART is used to replace Wan(丸), a component of the Chinese character. The shapes of Art and Wan are not similar, but since the replaced part is only a small part of the whole character, the identifiability is not influenced by the replacement. Example ③ is a shop sign designed for Ikea(a Swedish headquartered multinational conglomerate that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture), which uses the creative elements of Ikea and the Chinese character Jia (家, home) and constructs the visual image of the Chinese character Jia with Ikea. Example ④ is the logo named Left and Right, designed by Hu Ying, who constructed an integral whole through the combination of L and R, the initials of Left and Right, and the Chinese characters Zuo(左, left) and You (右, right), which express exactly the same meanings. compound characters composed of Chinese characters and English letters have free visual forms and are with irregular distributions. The content is often the meaning of single characters. They have the characteristics of fashion and modernity. [Fig. 3] shows compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters and English. [Table 4] shows the analysis of compound character design through the combination of Chinese characters and English.



[Fig. 3] Compound characters designed through the combination of Chinese characters and English

[Table 4] An analysis of the design of compound characters through the combination of Chinese characters and English

Visual forms	Free shapes, irregular distributions Simple colors
Contents	Expressing the meanings of single characters
Characteristics	Fashion and modernity

4. Discussion of analysis results

By grasping the concept and characteristics of compound characters, this paper explores the application of compound characters in modern design. By studying of three types of compound characters, this paper compares and analyzes the differences in visual characteristics and draws the following conclusions. There are no strict criteria when it comes to the degree of deformation in the design of compound characters. Nevertheless, the key is to control the relationships between characters, the first is the relationship between the shapes of the characters and the second is the relationship between their meanings. Relationships are the link in compound character design, and only by properly controlling the relationships can complete compound characters be designed. Through case analysis, it is found that the compound characters created through the combination of Chinese characters still tend to have strong traditional Chinese styles. Compared with compound characters created through the combination of Chinese characters and English, those composed only of Chinese characters have a weaker sense of modernity. This is because the design elements of these characters have a strong national style. Besides, designers prefer the traditional methods of compound character construction and color matching. As a result, the final ways of presentation are somewhat restrained and without many breakthroughs. In contrast, numbers and English are different from Chinese characters and have a sense of unfamiliarity and distance to Chinese people, making it easier to create familiar yet unfamiliar products through the organic combination of Chinese characters with them, thus realizing the organic combination of diverse cultures.

The ideas about the application of compound characters in modern design are as follows. First, regarding culture as the root. In the creation of compound characters, the influence of the cultural characteristics of Chinese characters on visual forms should be taken into special consideration, the coinage rules and the structures of Chinese characters should be grasped, and the cultural essence inside should be extracted, so as to create character images conforming to the rhythmic beauty of Chinese characters. Second, aesthetic integration. The intersection between Chinese and western cultures should be created, and symbols in western cultures should be integrated with the traditional characteristics of compound characters, thus creating resonances and realizing the diversified development of cultural production and image production and creating diverse, vivid and interesting character images by capturing the aesthetic intersection between different cultures. Third, the generation of meanings, that is, the stories behind the character images. Compound characters are the product of the visualization of

characters, in which the designers need to grasp the semantic meanings of the characters and the potential connections between them, choose appropriate semantic meanings, simplify them, and turn multiple meanings into one, so as to create concise and powerful design of new Chinese characters.

5. Conclusion

Compound characters are an essence of Chinese culture. Not only do they have unique visual forms, they are also able to integrate complex information into one with their highly concise graphics. All these features are reflecting the tension, aesthetic value and application value of the design of compound characters. In today's society, there is dense and complex information, and the unique visual language and composition forms of compound characters are conducive to the rapid and accurate transmission of visual information. The research on compound characters also accords with the demand of the contemporary age. The design of compound characters needs to be based on people's cultural background, select text information that can be understood by the audiences, and combined with modern aesthetics to create. In addition, The integration of Chinese characters with numbers and English characters is also an important direction of the innovation and development of compound Characters in the future. We are looking forward to seeing new sparks in the future, which will surely be created through the collision between compound characters and modern design.

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