

# The Characteristics and Spirit of Jinan Spring Culture: Historical Narration through Cultural and Creative Products

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## Abstract

This study explores the characteristics and spirit of Jinan's spring water culture through the narrative of cultural and creative products with historical significance. The research objectives aimed to investigate the historical background of Jinan's spring water culture, along with related historical and mythological stories, and to analyze the spiritual connotation, natural features, and artistic characteristics, including aesthetic tendencies of the spring water culture. Furthermore, the study aimed to establish a series of creative products related to daily life within the spring water culture to enhance its visibility. Since Jinan's spring water culture has been represented as a prominent natural, cultural heritage within Chinese culture,

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possessing both natural objective attributes and unique humanistic features. These cultural and creative products would serve as vital mediums for disseminating regional cultural characteristics, meeting the cultural demands of the public and promoting the visibility of spring water culture. This research employed a literature review, field study, and creative research in research methodology to achieve the objectives of the study.

**Keywords:** Spring Culture, Cultural and Creative Products, Narrative Design, Spiritual Characteristics.

## Introduction

With the flourishing development of China's cultural and creative industries, the spring water culture of Jinan, a representative of China's regional cultural heritage, has become a focus of attention among academia and businesses. This study, through field investigation, delves deeply not only into the specific reasons behind the formation of springs and the current development status of spring water culture, but also emphasizes how the excellent aspects of spring water culture can be showcased through cultural and creative products. Additionally, this research conducted in-depth analysis and evaluation of the cultural and creative products within Jinan's spring water parks. (Wang & Yang, 2020, p. 8)

## Methods

### Part One: The Geological Origin and Formation Period of Spring Water

The research methods were field investigation and literature research, by collecting information, it can be inferred that the spring water in Jinan was formed 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. Researcher Peng Yu explained in "Research on Jinan Spring Water Protection and Underground Space Utilization" that the underground sedimentary rock layers in Jinan form structural cracks, which, through later geological processes such as dissolution and erosion, form a huge space for the storage

and transportation of groundwater (see Figure 1 for the geological profile map of Jinan spring water genesis); The Neogene Xishan Movement period was the main period of karst development, divided into two sub periods: the tertiary and quaternary. The gaps that supply spring water were mainly formed during the Quaternary karst sub period. According to the ancient climate, it can be proven that the local environment was in an ice age 18,000 years ago, which was not conducive to the flow of spring water. Therefore, it is inferred that the spring water was formed between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago.



Figure 1: Geological Profile Map of Jinan Spring Water Genesis

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)

## Part Two: The Relationship between Spring Water and the Ancient Culture of Jinan

The earliest written record of Jinan spring water dates back 3,500 years to the oracle bone inscriptions of the Yin ruins (Wang, 2010, p.5). The ancient culture of Jinan originated

from Shun, one of the Five Emperors of China. Shun once cultivated in Lishan (formerly known as Jinan area), which is recorded in Mozi and Records of the Grand Historian. The Shun Temple and Shun Well in the ancient city of Jinan can be cited as evidence. Shun was the founder of Chinese moral culture, as recorded in the Records of the Grand Historian, “All virtues in the world began with Yu and Shun.” The soul of Emperor Shun’s cultural spirit can be called “virtue first, emphasis on education”, so it can be confirmed that the spiritual connotation of Jinan Spring Water Culture originated from “Shun”. In later generations, “Shun” was known as a symbol of moral culture, and Confucius, Mencius, and Mozi all pursued and praised him. Due to the large number of springs in Jinan, many interesting mythological stories have emerged, most of which are related to the causes of springs. Historical stories are related to famous historical figures in Jinan, such as the great poets Li Qingzhao and Xin Qiji, as well as the general Qin Qiong, who are well-known historical figures. These mythological and historical stories add a humanistic touch and mystery to spring culture. (Meng, 2007, p. 39)

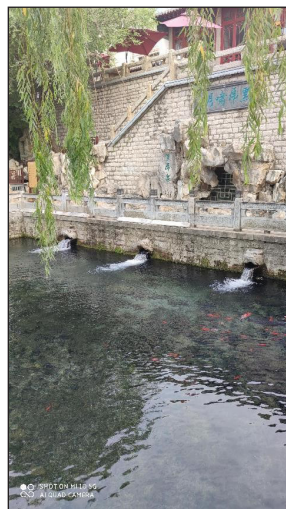
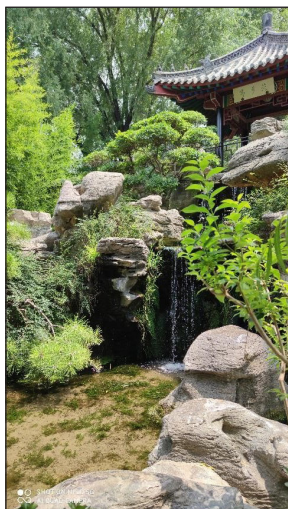
The formation of spring culture is also inseparable from its integration with secular culture. More and more public activities are beginning to intersect with spring water. The daily life of the public always accompanies spring water, and local people go to the spring mouth every day to fetch water, make tea, cook rice, and so on, as shown in Figure 2.

The rapid development of spring culture is closely related to the ruling class of feudal China, as Jinan's springs have natural advantages. With the increasing popularity of the spring and its unique geographical location and cultural concentration zone, the aristocrats of various dynasties have invested heavily in building a spring mouth and supporting garden landscapes for the spring (Song, 2010, p. 24), as shown in Figures 3 and 4. As a result, more and more literati are attracted by the springs and culture of Jinan, leaving behind a large number of beautiful poems and artistic works. The content recorded in these works of art has extremely high historical and artistic value, which provides important support for understanding the social and historical background and natural scenery of the time. At the same time, the style of poetry and art can also reflect the aesthetic trend of spring culture. (Zhang, 2013, p. 5)



Figure 2: Local people fetch spring water

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)



**Figure 3: Black Tiger Spring      Figure 4 Spouting Spring Park**

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021) Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)

### Part Three: Relationship between Spring and Modern Society

It is found that people's living conditions are not only limited to using springs as a source of survival, but also involve a rich variety of cultural and entertainment activities related to spring water culture. The official spring cultural event is the annual Spring Festival in Jinan. As shown in Figure 5, it is an official entertainment event organized by the 2021 Spring Festival, held in Spouting Spring Park and broadcasted live on Jinan TV station. In addition to official entertainment activities aimed at the entire society, there are also entertainment activities organized by citizens within various spring parks for the Spring Festival, as shown in Figure 5.

On the day of the Spring Festival which was captured during a field investigation by researchers in Wulongtan, as shown in Figure 6. the park organized a lively water splashing activity for its citizens which was deeply loved by the public.



Figure 5: Official activities of Spring Water Festival

Source: (Sina, 2021, Online)



Figure 6: Wulongtan Spring Water Festival Activities

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)



## Part Five: Spring Culture and Analysis of Cultural and Creative Products

Researchers have come to the conclusion that the current Quanzhou cultural and creative products lack a sense of design, resulting in a lack of uniqueness in promotion which is exactly the same as the marketing model of cultural and creative products in other regions as shown in Figure 7. Research related to spring culture should be conducted, with its uniqueness as the source for design, breaking away from nesting dolls, and creating a certain connection between various products, each with its own uniqueness, to form a certain design culture. (Ren, 2020, p.16) Secondly, there is a lack of understanding of the cultural characteristics of spring water, and there are few unique designs. Most of the designs adopt the form of following and imitating, imitating cultural and creative products, and imitating the museum mooncake series. Although the Palace Museum's cultural and creative ice cream can keep up with hot topics and generate certain benefits, it cannot lead and promote culture. The advantage of the current product lies in its ability to design related products in conjunction with current hot news, with timeliness characteristics, as shown in Figure 8. In 2021, there was a one in a hundred thousand chance of the appearance of the lotus in Jinan, which has attracted widespread social attention. Under this premise, a series of cultural and creative products have emerged, such as the Lotus Bookmark in Figure 9 and the Lotus Refrigerator Sticker in Figure 10, seizing the opportunity.



Figure 7: Spring Water Cultural and Creative Products

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)



Figure 8: Twin Lotus Flowers on One Stalk

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2021)



Figure 9: Bookmark of Twin Lotus Flowers on One Stalk

Source: (Byliyuanzhen, 2021, Online)



Figure 10: Fridge Label of Twin Lotus Flowers on One Stalk

Source: (Byliyuanzhen, 2021, Online)

Summary: Through on-site investigation, geological research, and cultural exploration of Jinan spring water culture, this study demonstrated how Jinan spring water has evolved from natural phenomena to complex cultural symbols.

This study revealed the significant value of spring culture in cultural, social, artistic, and historical aspects. In this context, this study was of great significance for the understanding and protection of Jinan spring culture, providing strong support for the inheritance and promotion of Jinan spring culture, as well as the competitiveness and market potential of spring cultural and creative products.

## Research Results:

### Research Achievements on the Spiritual Connotation of Jinan Spring Water Culture

#### One, The Historical Origins of Spring Culture

The origin of the spiritual inheritance of spring water culture can be traced back to the Dongyi culture in the ancient Shandong region of China, which is one of the origins of Chinese culture. This culture originated from the “Later Li Culture” 8,300 years ago and has gone through the development of the “Longshan Culture”, “Yueshi Culture”, and “Dawenkou Culture,”-running through the entire Neolithic period to the Western Zhou Dynasty. As the birthplace of Shun, the pioneer of Chinese moral culture, Jinan region has a close connection with the title “Land of Rites and Etiquette”.

## Two, The Integration of Confucian Culture and Spring Water Culture

Shandong, as the hometown of Confucius and Mencius, has been deeply influenced by Confucian culture. The ideological ethnicity of the people of Shandong is mainly based on agriculture, which is relatively simple, kind, and simple. In addition, ancient poets used the canals, streams, and beautiful landscapes of Jinan springs to express their emotions, leaving behind rich poems and articles. Three, Cultural Differences between North and South China and Their Manifestation in Spring Culture

The cultural style of southern and northern China is particularly reflected in the spring culture of Jinan. Although Jinan is known as the “northern Jiangnan”, its humanistic spirit is mainly characterized by its bold and bold “scholarly demeanor”. This characteristic is also reflected in art forms such as painting, calligraphy, and literature.

## Four, The Cultivation of Honesty and Sense of Responsibility

The integrity and strong sense of responsibility of the people of Jinan, shaped by their historical and social background, have become a part of the regional culture. It is not only reflected in its military status in history, but also in its reverence for national responsibility, persistence in patriotism, and respect and love for Chinese land.

## Five, The Humanistic Spirit of Spring Culture

Jinan Spring Culture combines the elegance of Jiangnan with the boldness of the north, demonstrating the characteristics of historical thickness, openness, and confidence. This cultural fusion embodies a humanistic spirit that not only conforms to the trends of the times, but also practices a free temperament that is not limited to small details. The beginning of the humanistic spirit of spring culture originated from “Shun,” who valued filial piety, advocated “morality first, emphasized education, and pursued the path of harmony,” which became the core content of the humanistic spirit of spring culture.

## Conclusion

Jinan Spring Water Culture is a cultural phenomenon with strong regional characteristics, which draws on the essence of ancient Chinese history, Confucian tradition, cultural differences between the North and South, and modern social responsibility. By comprehensively analyzing these elements, one can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the spiritual connotations of Jinan spring culture. This has made contributions to promoting, inheriting, and protecting spring culture, and established the uniqueness of spring culture, thus providing a foundation for broader cultural exchanges.

## Research Achievements in the Spirit of the Times

The research results on Jinan spring culture and the spirit of the times reveal the transformation and inheritance of this regional characteristic culture. From the early emergence of culture in ancient times, to the diverse integration during the Shang, Zhou, Spring and Autumn, and Warring States periods, to the philosophical dissemination and cultural innovation during the Qin and Han dynasties, the garden aesthetics and cultural constraints during the Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, as well as the cultural revival and innovation in modern times, Jinan Spring Culture has demonstrated its cross generational constraints, diversity, and sustained development vitality. This unique cultural phenomenon not only connects the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, but also reflects the spiritual pursuit and cultural value of Jinan and the entire Chinese civilization in different historical periods, providing valuable cultural heritage and inspiration for modern society.

## Research Achievements in the History and Mythological Stories of Jinan Spring Water

The humanistic spirit of Shun: As a legendary figure in the ancient Yao and Shun dynasties of China, Shun played an important role in the spring culture of Jinan. His filial piety and virtues not only moved heaven and earth, but also helped him with all things during the cultivation of the mountains. The story of Shun has been widely circulated in historical

literature and artistic works, becoming an important spiritual content for the inheritance of spring culture.

The cultural contributions of Jinan Er'an: Xin Qiji and Li Qingzhao are important components of Jinan spring culture. Xin Qiji expressed his concerns about the rise and fall of the country through bold and patriotic lyrics, while Li Qingzhao developed a unique female perspective and a temperament that transcends the times. Her poetry and indomitable spirit of pursuing freedom still hold high educational and artistic value today.

Through these research results, it can be seen that the humanistic spirit of Jinan spring water culture not only reflects excellent moral concepts and positive social value orientations, but also integrates the artistic pursuits of historical figures and literary masters. These elements together constitute the rich connotation and unique charm of Jinan spring culture, providing valuable cultural resources and spiritual inspiration for modern society.

### Creative Product Creation Practice of Spring Water Culture

This study chose two narrative themes, the first being the creation of the theme of Xin Qiji in the “Famous Historical Figures” series. As shown in Figure 11, the design draft adopts a macro perspective composition approach, aiming to showcase more historical story information while incorporating the environmental characteristics of Jinan spring culture. This design draft aims to display the character states of Xin Qiji in different historical periods in different regions, mainly using environmental differences



for segmentation, such as the separation between water and mountains, and the separation between mountains and deserts. Therefore, the content of each area is compared to a historical story in Xin Qiji's life, cleverly using the flow of lines and the observation habit of the human eye from left to right to connect each area in the picture, forming a complete narrative story. Moreover, the cultural and creative forms adopted include porcelain plate color printing and the unique ceramic production method of "carving porcelain" in Shandong, China. Porcelain carving is the process of manually carving the fired porcelain with a carving knife, causing the surface glaze to peel off and form a visual representation. Figure 12 shows the color draft of the design, while Figure 13 shows the porcelain plate cultural and creative product, and Figures 14-15 show the porcelain carving cultural and creative product and the porcelain carving production process, respectively.



**Figure 11: Xin Qiji's Design Line Draft**

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



Figure 12: Xin Qiji's Design Color Draft

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



Figure 13: Xin Qiji's porcelain plate cultural and creative products, porcelain plate printing

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



Figure 14: Xin Qiji's carved porcelain cultural and creative products

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



Figure 15: Porcelain Engraving Process

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)

The second theme of the “Famous Historical Figures” series is Li Qingzhao. She is a native of Zhangqiu District, Jinan City, and a representative poet of the Song Dynasty’s gentle and graceful style. She is known as the “Number One Talented Woman of All Time” and her poetry holds an important position in history. She is also a well-known historical figure in today’s China. As shown in Figure 16, the composition first adopts the traditional arch structure of ancient China, which separates the space through obstacles such as rockeries, doors, and windows, forming a sense of spatial division. The story is narrated from a distance to enhance the immersive experience of the viewer. This can bring fun to the design of future cultural and creative products, and also leave space for viewers to imagine.

The central idea of this design draft comes from several poems by Li Qingzhao. Firstly, the war content inside the window of the room actually originates from Li Qingzhao’s poem “Summer Quatarins”, which translates “to be a hero both alive and after death”. This is a carrier of courage and a fearless attitude towards life. This reflects Li Qingzhao’s distinct life values and patriotic passion at that time. This is one of the main cultural elements in spring culture, and it is also different from the gentle and tender sentiment in Jiangnan. Jinan’s spring culture is permeated with a generous and vigorous spirit.



**Figure 16: Li Qingzhao's Design Script**

Source: (Zhu, 2023)

The cultural and creative forms chosen by the researchers for this artwork were paper carving, porcelain plate printing, and porcelain plate printing. The reason for choosing paper carving was that the original design has a deep sense of depth, and the multi-level structure of paper carving can effectively express the spatial sense of the image and the distance of lighting. The first was to visually reflect the sense of space, and secondly, to emotionally understand the order of various emotions in the character's heart, as shown in Figure 17. Figures 18 and 19 showed porcelain plate printing and porcelain plate printing, respectively. Porcelain plates are cultural and creative products with decorative effects as the main focus, while porcelain plates not only have decorative effects but also have practical value.



Figure 17: Li Qingzhao's paper carving cultural and creative products

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



Figure 18: Li Qingzhao's porcelain plate cultural and creative products

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)



**Figure 19: Li Qingzhao's porcelain plate cultural  
and creative products**

Source: (Zhu, Photographer, 2023)

## Conclusion

Through in-depth investigation and analysis, this study has drawn the following main research findings and conclusions:

1. Digging deeper into the historical background and related historical and mythological stories of Jinan's spring culture helped to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the city's history, culture, and social characteristics. This included the reasons for the formation of spring culture, which plays an important role in studying the harmonious development of current spring culture. Moreover, the information obtained from the study provided a content basis for creative products of spring culture, strengthening the humanistic spirit of spring culture.



2. This study analyzed the spiritual connotation, natural characteristics, artistic features, and aesthetic tendencies of spring culture, integrated the information content of spring culture, were conducive to the promotion and inheritance of spring culture, and helped to better understand and appreciate the multifaceted nature of spring culture. At the same time, it also provided rich inspiration for cultural protection, urban planning, and literary and artistic creation.

3. Design and create a series of creative spring culture products to make spring culture more closely related to people's daily lives. These creative products, by incorporating elements of spring culture, can attract more people to pay attention to, understand, and love spring culture. This also helped promote Jinan's spring water culture and enhanced the city's cultural awareness. This also promoted the development of local cultural industries, satisfied the consumption desire of local residents for cultural and creative products, and enhanced the added value of cultural, economic, emotional, artistic, and historical aspects of spring water cultural and creative products. This was conducive to revitalizing the local cultural market and creating a healthy competitive atmosphere among designers.



## Research Suggestions

1. Digging deeper into cultural connotations: Further delving deeper into the connotations of Jinan spring culture, including literature, art, philosophy, and other aspects, in order to obtain a more comprehensive and profound understanding.

2. Interdisciplinary research: Encourage interdisciplinary research, combining Jinan spring culture with other fields such as geography, anthropology, architecture, etc., to reveal its relationship with different aspects and expand research perspectives.

3. Cultural comparative study: To compare the water culture of Jinan's spring water with that of other regions or countries, explore their similarities and differences, and better understand the position of spring water culture in the global cultural context.

4. Community participation and feedback mechanism: Conduct more systematic research on community participation, establish more effective feedback mechanisms to better understand the audience's understanding and needs for spring culture, and provide suggestions for the design and promotion of cultural and creative products.

5. International communication: Explore how to better integrate Jinan Spring Culture into international cultural exchanges and enhance its international influence through international cooperation and dissemination.

The above suggestions aim to convey the characteristics and spirit of Jinan spring culture through cultural and creative products in a historical narrative way, promoting cultural inheritance and development.

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