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Article

Research on the Creative Regeneration Mechanism of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Mural Art from the Perspective of Regional Semiotics

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Abstract: As globalization and rapid urbanization accelerate, the traditional mural art of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, functioning as a profound visual carrier of Lingnan culture and maritime heritage, faces the significant challenge of deconstructing traditional symbols while reconstructing modern aesthetic values. This paper utilizes the comprehensive theoretical framework of regional semiotics to systematically examine the complex historical context, cultural evolution, and unique visual characteristics of mural art located in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China. To achieve this, the paper conducts an in-depth, multidimensional analysis of the surrounding natural landscape, rich human history, and deeply embedded symbolic spiritual values inherent in this art form. The methodology relies on a robust combination of qualitative text analysis, extensive field investigations, and detailed empirical case studies. Additionally, the research proposes a highly effective creative regeneration mechanism directly guided by contemporary social needs and strongly supported by technological innovation and cross-disciplinary integration. The study conclusively found that the modern translation of regional symbols critically needs to consider the seamless continuity of cultural roots alongside the progressive innovation of artistic expression. Furthermore, the strategic construction of a multi-party collaborative ecological system is identified as the fundamental key to promoting the sustainable development of mural art. Ultimately, this study serves as a vital theoretical reference for preserving regional cultural heritage, significantly contributing to enhancing the overall cultural soft power of the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China.

Keywords: regional semiotics; mural art; creative regeneration; lingnan culture

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1. Introduction

As the frontier of China's development and opening up, the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region has a rich historical and cultural heritage along with unique regional cultural characteristics. Among these, mural art serves as an important form of expression for the regional culture of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, encapsulating the living customs, religious beliefs, and aesthetic concepts of the local population [1]. From ancient temple murals to modern urban street murals, the mural art of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China has showcased the charm and vitality of regional culture through its distinctive artistic style and profound cultural connotations. However, with societal changes and the passage of time, the mural art of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China faces challenges in terms of inheritance and innovation. Traditional mural art forms have gradually lost their original space in modern society, while new creative concepts and techniques have yet to be fully developed and applied. Consequently, exploring the creative regeneration mechanisms

of mural art in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China from the perspective of regional semiotics, and achieving its inheritance and innovation in contemporary society, has become a significant topic in cultural research.

This study holds substantial theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, conducting in-depth research on regional semiotics and the mural art of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China contributes to enriching and refining the theoretical framework of regional cultural studies, while also providing valuable insights for the study of other regional cultures. Practically, this paper investigates the creative regeneration mechanisms of mural art in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, offering new perspectives for the development of cultural industries, urban image enhancement, and cultural tourism in these regions. This promotes the preservation and evolution of regional culture, fostering cultural prosperity and innovation [2, 3].

2. Overview of Regional Semiotics and Wall Painting in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

2.1. Analysis of Regional Semiotics Theory

2.1.1. Basic Concepts of Regional Semiotics

As an emerging discipline, regional semiotics integrates theories and methods from multiple fields, such as semiotics, cultural geography, and sociology. It studies the generation, evolution, cultural significance, and expression of various cultural symbols within specific regions. The focus lies on how regional culture is conveyed and preserved through symbolic forms and the roles these symbols play in social life [4, 5].

From the perspective of semiotics, symbols serve as fundamental tools for humans to convey meaning [2]. For instance, the image of the dragon is a prominent regional cultural symbol in the wall paintings of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China. The dragon's form (signifier) often embodies auspiciousness, authority, and power, among other cultural connotations (signified). This process of deriving meaning from signifier to signified constitutes a core aspect of regional semiotics research.

Regional semiotics highlights the uniqueness and diversity of regional cultures. Variations in natural environments, historical developments, and social structures lead to the formation of distinct cultural symbol systems in different regions. These systems not only reflect the external characteristics of regional culture but also encapsulate deeper cultural values, beliefs, and aesthetic preferences of local communities [6]. For example, the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region, due to its unique geographical location, serves as a significant hub for cultural exchanges between China and the West. This cultural fusion is evident in local wall paintings, which incorporate elements such as traditional Chinese myths, historical figures, Western religious motifs, and architectural styles, resulting in a distinctive artistic and cultural identity.

Furthermore, regional semiotics examines the dynamic evolution of symbols. Over time and with societal changes, regional cultural symbols undergo transformations, with their meanings being reinterpreted and reconstructed in different historical and social contexts. For instance, modern wall paintings in the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region have integrated contemporary artistic techniques and themes reflective of the current era, while still retaining traditional elements [7]. This blend enriches and diversifies the cultural significance conveyed by these artworks.

2.1.2. Research Scope and Methods of Regional Semiotics

The research scope of regional semiotics is broad, encompassing multiple fields such as architecture, art, and language [4]. In architecture, regional semiotics examines the cultural significance embedded in elements like a building's form, style, and decoration. For instance, traditional Lingnan architecture in the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region, characterized by unique brick carvings and murals, serves as a tangible representation of regional cultural symbols. These symbols not only showcase local architectural techniques and aesthetic features but also reflect the region's history, culture, social structure, and lifestyle.

In the field of art, regional semiotics explores cultural symbols in various art forms, including painting, sculpture, music, and dance [8]. For example, Cantonese music, with its distinctive melodies, instruments, and performance styles, has become a significant symbol of Lingnan culture. Its lively rhythms and graceful tunes embody the spirit and vitality of the people in the Lingnan region.

In the language domain, regional semiotics investigates the cultural connotations embedded in dialects and proverbs. Cantonese, a unique dialect in the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region, functions not only as a communication tool for local residents but also as a carrier of rich regional cultural information [9]. Its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation exhibit distinct regional characteristics, reflecting the history, culture, social life, and thought patterns of the Lingnan region.

Scholars employ various methods to conduct in-depth research on regional semiotics. Field research is a key approach, involving direct engagement with regional culture through interactions with residents, observations of their lifestyles, folk activities, and artistic creations, and the collection of first-hand data. For instance, when studying wall paintings in the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region, researchers may conduct on-site inspections of murals in ancestral halls, temples, and residential buildings [1]. Additionally, interviews with mural creators, conservators, and local residents provide insights into the creation processes, historical origins, and cultural meanings of these artworks.

Text analysis is another common method in regional semiotics research [10]. By examining literature, images, and audio-visual materials related to regional culture, researchers can uncover cultural symbols. For example, historical documents, local chronicles, and genealogical records from the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macao, China region can reveal the development of local wall paintings, their stylistic evolution, and their connection to regional culture. Similarly, analyzing mural images can shed light on their artistic features, such as composition, color, and themes, as well as the cultural significance they convey.

Interdisciplinary research methods also play a crucial role in regional semiotics. Given its multidisciplinary nature, regional semiotics integrates theories and methods from fields such as semiotics, cultural geography, sociology, anthropology, and art to examine cultural symbols from diverse perspectives [11]. For instance, the relationship between cultural symbols and the geographical environment can be explored using cultural geography, while sociology can provide insights into the role of cultural symbols in social structures and changes. Interdisciplinary approaches enable a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings and implications of regional cultural symbols.

2.2. The Development and Characteristics of Wall Painting in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

2.2.1. Historical Evolution

In earlier periods, murals in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, were mainly created in religious temples. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, mural painting extended into ancestral halls and residential houses. The murals of the Chen Clan Ancestral Hall in Guangzhou depict scenes from Romance of the Three Kingdoms as well as auspicious flowers and birds. They served functions of clan education and aesthetic decoration, reflecting the influence of Confucian ethics on artistic expression.

Since the modern period, urbanization has shifted murals from private spaces into the public domain. The mural industry in Dafen Village, Shenzhen, reflects the commercial transformation of regional art under globalization through the mass production of Western classical oil paintings. The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macau, China Greater Bay Area has also given rise to murals centered on the theme of cultural symbiosis. For example, murals in the Hengqin Free Trade Zone of Zhuhai integrate landmarks from Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, with

technological elements associated with the Bay Area, demonstrating the modern reconstruction of regional culture.

2.2.2. Regional Characteristics: Visual Integration of Diverse Cultures

In terms of color application, the wall painting of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, is known for its bright and vivid palette. The warm and humid climate of the Lingnan region, together with its colorful natural landscape, provides abundant inspiration for mural coloration. Painters often employ red, yellow, green, and blue to create a warm and lively visual effect. For example, in ancestral hall murals in the Cantonese area, red is widely used to depict the costumes and decorations of figures, conveying auspiciousness, festivity, and prosperity, while green is often used to represent natural elements such as mountains, rivers, and plants, symbolizing vitality and vigor. The interplay of these bright colors produces a strong visual impact [12].

Regarding subject matter, the wall painting of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, is rich and diverse, encompassing both classic elements of traditional Chinese culture and scenes of daily life and folk narratives with regional characteristics. In addition to common themes such as historical stories, myths, legends, and depictions of flowers, birds, fish, and insects, there is also substantial content related to maritime culture. As this region is closely connected with coastal life, the ocean holds an important place in local communities. Consequently, elements such as fishing boats and marine life frequently appear in murals, vividly reflecting the close relationship between local people and the sea, as well as their appreciation of maritime culture.

As an important gateway for China's communication with the world, the Guangdong-Hong Kong, China-Macau, China region has long been shaped by diverse cultural influences. This cultural integration is vividly reflected in wall painting, where murals often incorporate both Chinese and Western artistic elements. In some modern murals, painters skillfully apply Western techniques of perspective, light, and shadow to express traditional Chinese themes and content, enabling the works to embody both the charm of Eastern culture and the modern sensibility of Western art. At the same time, certain Western cultural symbols and motifs also appear in murals, such as European-style architecture and figures from Western mythology. These elements complement traditional Chinese cultural imagery and together form a distinctive artistic style [8]. For example, in the murals of some commercial buildings in Hong Kong, China, traditional Chinese dragon and phoenix patterns coexist with elements of Western abstract art, demonstrating the multicultural character of Hong Kong, China, as an international metropolis. This cultural fusion enriches the connotations of wall painting in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, and gives it a more open and inclusive artistic character, making it an important reflection of regional cultural exchange and integration.

3. Analysis of Regional Symbols in the Wall Painting of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

3.1. Natural Landscape Symbols

3.1.1. The Symbolic Significance of Mountains and Seas

As a highly developed international city, Hong Kong, China frequently features seascape elements in its murals, becoming a unique symbol of regional culture. The ocean not only provides it with important transportation channels and rich fishery resources, but also shapes its open and inclusive urban character. In some murals, magnificent seascapes are often depicted, such as "Sunrise over Victoria Harbor", where the sun shines on the sea and seabirds fly in the sky. The seascape in the painting not only illustrates the prosperity of Hong Kong, China as an international shipping center, but also symbolizes its open and inclusive spiritual qualities.

3.1.2. Cultural Implications of Plants and Flowers

As a symbol of Hong Kong, China, Bauhinia frequently appears in wall paintings across the region. Its significance extends beyond aesthetics. Bauhinia patterns are often

visible in public buildings and community murals, depicted either in realistic forms or through abstract artistic expressions. The flower symbolizes the strong connection between Hong Kong, China, and the mainland. The five petals encircling the pistil represent Hong Kong, China, as an integral part of the nation. Additionally, it conveys the prosperity and development of Hong Kong, China, within the embrace of the motherland. This imagery reflects the local people's affection for the nation and their aspirations for a bright future, embodying a sense of national pride and cultural identity [13, 14].

3.2. Humanistic and Historical Symbols

3.2.1. Symbolic Deconstruction of Historical Buildings

The Ruins of St. Paul's, a landmark of Macau, China, frequently appears in wall paintings within the region. Originally the front wall of St. Paul's Cathedral, it remains as a solitary structure after multiple fires. Its design resembles a traditional Chinese archway and integrates elements of the European Renaissance with Oriental architectural styles. Featuring intricate carvings and diverse patterns, it holds significant artistic value. In murals, it often serves as the central focus or background, symbolizing the unique history and culture of Macau, China. The structure stands as a historical testament to over 400 years of cultural exchanges between China and the West. It harmoniously combines Portuguese architectural influences, Catholic religious motifs, and traditional Chinese auspicious patterns and carving techniques.

3.2.2. Symbolic Coding of Folk Activities

The Guangdong lion dance, a highly representative traditional folk activity in the Lingnan region, is frequently depicted in Guangdong wall paintings. This art form has a long history in the area and serves not only as entertainment but also as a folk performance imbued with profound cultural significance. In murals, lion dance scenes are vividly portrayed, with performers dressed in vibrant costumes collaborating with the lions to execute intricate and captivating movements. The lion dance symbolizes good fortune and the dispelling of negative influences, reflecting the bravery, resilience, and optimism of the Guangdong people. It is an essential feature of traditional festivals and celebrations, where performances are conducted to pray for prosperity and peace, as well as to express aspirations for a better future. The depiction of lion dance scenes in murals not only preserves and recreates this traditional folk activity but also conveys the spiritual essence of the Guangdong people. These representations enable future generations to appreciate the unique charm and enduring vitality of Guangdong's traditional culture.

4. Construction of a Mechanism for the Regeneration of Artistic Creativity of Murals in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

4.1. Driving Factors: Dual Promotion by Social Needs and Cultural Mission

4.1.1. Visual Strategies for Shaping the City's Image

Guangzhou's Urban Memory Project reconstructs arcade commercial scenes through murals in historic neighborhoods, converting historical symbols into visual identifiers of the city brand. In Zhuhai Hengqin, an ocean-themed mural district has been developed to reinforce the image of a coastal city through marine symbolic elements. In this context, murals function as visual representations of the city and enhance regional recognition through symbolic narrative expression.

4.1.2. The Contemporary Mission of Cultural Inheritance and Innovation

The inheritors of Foshan's intangible cultural heritage have transformed brick carving techniques into a language for mural creation, preserving traditional craftsmanship through three-dimensional murals [15]. Artists in Hong Kong, China, have utilized AR technology to transform ancient architectural murals into interactive digital symbols, achieving a technological reinterpretation of traditional culture. The dialectical unity of inheritance and innovation remains essential for the sustainable development of regional culture.

4.2. Implementation Path: Technology Empowerment and Cross-Border Integration

4.2.1. Technological Innovation

Digital technology facilitates transformative advancements in creative processes. Drawing software enhances the efficiency of mural sketch iterations, while 3D modeling technology allows for the visualization of intricate spatial murals. Immersive technologies, such as VR, are employed in artistic settings to enable viewers to experience mural scenes in three dimensions. The adoption of innovative materials, including nano-pigments and self-healing coatings, contributes to extending the durability of murals and enhancing their textural qualities [9, 12].

4.2.2. Cross-Sector Cooperation and Exchanges

Cooperation with the science and technology field has introduced innovative possibilities to the wall painting of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China. With advancements in technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of Things, the integration of wall painting and technology has become increasingly close [8]. Through artificial intelligence technology, artists can generate unique artistic patterns and color combinations using algorithms, providing new sources of inspiration for mural creation. In one artistic innovation project, abstract patterns generated by artificial intelligence algorithms were applied to mural creation, resulting in works with distinctive visual effects. Big data technology enables artists to better understand audience needs and preferences, thereby enhancing their creative process. By analyzing behavioral data from art exhibitions, social media, and other platforms, artists can gain insights into audience interests regarding murals of various themes, styles, and forms of expression. This allows them to adjust their creative direction to produce works that align more closely with audience expectations.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of regional semiotics, this study clarifies a distinctive perspective and method for examining regional cultural symbols through a systematic analysis of regional semiotic theory, thereby establishing a solid theoretical foundation for further exploration of the connotations of regional symbols in the wall paintings of Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao. In tracing the developmental context and characteristics of wall painting in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, the study demonstrates its historical evolution from ancient to modern periods, as well as its distinctive regional features in color application, thematic content, and cultural integration, highlighting its unique value as an important carrier of regional culture.

These findings make a meaningful contribution to the development of wall painting in Guangdong, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, as well as to the inheritance and innovation of regional culture. They provide both theoretical guidance and practical reference for the development of wall painting in the new era, while also supporting innovation in themes, forms of expression, and material application. In this way, wall painting can better respond to the aesthetic needs and cultural development trends of contemporary society and offer stronger theoretical support and practical guidance for cultural development in the Greater Bay Area.

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