

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

A Study on the Visual Symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion's Head Mask

Zhan Sudan

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A Study on the Visual Symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion's Head Mask

Zhan Sudan

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

.....

Signature 

Name: Zhan Sudan

Matric No.: 20010141

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date : 2024.5.30

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ABSTRACT

Lion dance, an ancient cultural symbol deeply embedded in Chinese heritage, particularly in Guangdong Province, boasts a unique and rich visual language. This research explores the visual symbols and elements within the lion dance masks of Guangdong, revealing the profound cultural, traditional, and artistic expressions they embody. The primary objective is to establish a comprehensive and reliable data framework of visual symbols associated with Guangdong lion dance masks, serving as a valuable resource for government agencies, traditional culture researchers, artistic creators, and industry professionals. This framework will lay the theoretical foundation for the effective protection, promotion, and development of this cherished cultural heritage. Employing a multifaceted approach, the study combines literature review, interviews, field investigations, theoretical analysis, image analysis, and comparative methods to meticulously examine the visual symbols of lion dance masks. This comprehensive approach provides a holistic overview of the visual landscape of lion dance masks across four distinct regions within Guangdong Province. Through a semiotics approach, the study unravels the intricacies and diversity of Guangdong lion dance culture, shedding light on its rich cultural significance and values. A thorough analysis of the visual symbols embedded within Guangdong lion dance masks, juxtaposed with existing literature and interviewee perspectives, reveals inconsistencies and gaps in the available documentation. Consequently, this study systematically addresses these shortcomings, filling the void in knowledge within this domain. This research serves as a cornerstone for future scholarly endeavors dedicated to Guangdong lion head culture. To fully harness its potential for cultural preservation, transmission, and global recognition, the government should implement appropriate measures. Such initiatives will undoubtedly empower this

research to contribute significantly to the safeguarding, perpetuation, and international dissemination of China's rich cultural heritage.

Keywords: Lion dance masks, Visual symbols, Chinese heritage, Cultural preservation, Semiotics

Kajian tentang Simbol-Simbol Visual pada Topeng Kepala Singa Pemanggil Guangdong

ABSTRAK

Tarian singa, simbol budaya kuno yang tertanam dalam warisan Cina, khususnya di Wilayah Guangdong, memiliki bahasa visual yang unik dan kaya. Penyelidikan ini meneroka simbol dan elemen visual dalam topeng tarian singa Guangdong, mendedahkan ekspresi budaya, tradisi, dan seni yang mendalam. Objektif utama adalah untuk membentuk rangka kerja data yang komprehensif dan boleh dipercayai mengenai simbol visual yang berkaitan dengan topeng tarian singa Guangdong, yang berfungsi sebagai sumber yang bernilai bagi agensi kerajaan, penyelidik budaya tradisional, pencipta seni, dan profesional industri. Rangka kerja ini akan meletakkan asas teori untuk perlindungan, promosi, dan pembangunan yang berkesan bagi warisan budaya yang dihargai ini. Menggunakan pendekatan pelbagai aspek, kajian ini menggabungkan tinjauan literatur, wawancara, penyelidikan lapangan, analisis teori, analisis imej, dan kaedah perbandingan untuk meneliti dengan teliti simbol visual pada topeng tarian singa. Pendekatan yang komprehensif ini memberikan gambaran menyeluruh mengenai landskap visual topeng tarian singa di empat wilayah yang berbeza di Wilayah Guangdong. Melalui pendekatan semiotik, kajian ini merungkai kehalusan dan kepelbagaian budaya tarian singa Guangdong, menyoroti kepentingan dan nilai budaya yang kaya. Analisis menyeluruh terhadap simbol visual yang tertanam dalam topeng tarian singa Guangdong, disusun dengan literatur sedia ada dan perspektif temubual, mendedahkan ketidakselarasan dan jurang dalam dokumentasi yang ada. Akibatnya, kajian ini secara sistematik menangani kekurangan ini, mengisi kekosongan pengetahuan dalam bidang ini. Penyelidikan ini berfungsi sebagai asas bagi usaha ilmiah masa depan yang didedikasikan untuk budaya

kepala singa Guangdong. Untuk sepenuhnya memanfaatkan potensinya untuk pemeliharaan budaya, penularan, dan pengiktirafan global, kerajaan harus melaksanakan langkah-langkah yang sesuai. Inisiatif sedemikian tidak diragukan lagi akan memperkasakan penyelidikan ini untuk menyumbang secara signifikan kepada pemeliharaan, penerusan, dan penyebaran antarabangsa warisan budaya kaya China.

Kata kunci: *Topeng tarian singa, Simbol visual, Warisan Cina, Pemeliharaan budaya, Semiotik*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Baidu scholar	Baidu scholar official website
CAQDAS	computer assisted qualitative data analysis software
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
De Sheng	De Sheng Musical Instrument Factory
Fo,He-style	Foshan & Heshan-style
Guan	Guan Gong; Guan Yu
H	height
Huang	Huang Zhong
L	length
Liu	Liu Bei
Ma	Ma Chao
W	weight
Zhan	Zhan Sudan
Zhang	Zhang Fei
Zhao	Zhao Yun

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

This study takes the visual symbol of lion dance masks as its research object. Starting with the visual elements of lion dance masks, it traces the origin and development of Chinese lion dance culture, outlines the historical context of Chinese lion dance culture, and uses the Guangdong Awakening Lion mask as a "viewfinder" to explore the inheritance and evolution, prosperity and decline, and intrinsic and expressive aspects of the visual symbol of the Guangdong Awakening Lion mask.

The development of lion dance culture in China has gone through several stages: it originated in the Eastern Han Dynasty, became popular during the Three Kingdoms period, thrived in the Tang Dynasty, widely spread during the Song Dynasty and developed various types of lion dances, and the "Awakening Lion" with distinct characteristics was developed in the late Qing Dynasty and early Ming Dynasty, but declined before the reform and opening-up era in China (Xie, 2020). Since the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization issued the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), protecting human intangible cultural heritage has become a universal desire and common concern, and various forms of lion dance have re-emerged in front of the public as manifestations of "Intangible Cultural Heritage".

1.1.1 Origin of Lion and Lion Dance

The earliest book that recorded that lions were presented to China as gifts by the Western Regions was The History of the Han Dynasty - Biography of the Western Regions, which recorded that “the land of Wuyi is hot and flat. There are vegetation, livestock, grains, fruits and vegetables, food and drink, palace, market, money and goods, weapons, Taoba, Shizi, and rhinoceros”. Among them, “Shizi” means lions. Jin (Jin Dynasty) recorded in Volume 1 of “The Biography of Mu Tianzi” that “Suanni is also a lion and comes from the Western Regions”. Li (1982) is also indicated “The Lion from the Western Regions” in his book. The above information can clearly indicate that lions are not produced in China. During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Buddhism was introduced to China. In the Chinese version of the Buddhist scripture, the riding animal of Wenshu Bodhisattva is a green lion, which is known as the spirit animal of Dharma protector (Liang, 2012). The model of the green lion in Chaoshan, Guangdong, also follows the model of the legendary Green Lion. The appearance of lions is powerful and fierce, and they are often accompanied by Bodhisattvas. Since the Eastern Han Dynasty, folk people have closely linked “exorcism” with the model of lions. The legend and origin of lions in China have a wide influence on the decorative elements in ancient China. In Chinese folk, lion art has a variety of forms, mostly appearing in murals, stone carvings, gold and silver objects and other static objects. Lion dance is a performance activity and an important branch of lion culture (Ji, 2017).

There are also many explanations about the origin of lion dance. Ban, G., a famous historian of the Eastern Han Dynasty, recorded the “Xiangren” in the “Book of Han · Rites

and Music Annals", it refers to people wearing masks to perform in sacrifice. Meng, K., a man from the Wei Dynasty of the Three Kingdoms, wrote in a note for "Xiangren" that "those who act fish and shrimp, which can also act lions". This means that "Xiangren" is a masked artist who acts fish, shrimp and lion. It can be seen that there were lion role plays in the Han Dynasty, which was also called the predecessor of Lion Dance by scholars. Another origin is that during the Northern Wei Dynasty, there was a rebellion by the Huns. The Tartars made a wooden lion head and dressed as a lion with hemp rope. When paying tribute, the emperor of Wei was assassinated by a lion dance. Fortunately, the courtiers saw through and repelled the foreign enemies. Later, because the emperor of the State of Wei liked lion dancing, he ordered his courtiers to imitate the lion, so lion dancing was spread (Zeng, 2011). Yang (2011), the Northern Wei Dynasty wrote in the Records of "Luoyang Jialan" that "the six-tooth white elephant negates Sakya in the void. The solemn Buddha knows how to use gold and jade. It is difficult to be different in work. On April 4, this image often appears. The evil dispelling lion guides him in front of Buddha". That is, when traveling in Buddhism, the lion leads the way with the role of law protection and exorcism. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Buddhist temples were large, and the temple fairs were popular, the lion dance rose with it then.

By the Tang Dynasty, lion dance had become extremely popular. This can be seen in the "Yuefu Zaxun - Qiuci Department": There are five lions in play. They are more than ten feet tall, each dressed in five colours. There are twelve people, they wear red, and they love to touch their forehead. They use the red brushes paint their clothes in red. People called them "Lion Man", and this play called "Tai Ping Music", it means "peaceful music dance" (Duan, Tang Dynasty). This is the five square lion dances in the court of the Tang

Dynasty. The article describes the live performance of large-scale lion dance. During the Tang Dynasty, the renowned poet Bai Juyi wrote in a poem titled “Western Liang Artistry” as follows: “Western Liang Artistry, masked Huns people (foreigners) feign as lions. Carved wooden heads and silk for tails, with gold-plated eyes and silver-clad teeth. The dynamic fur attire flutters with twin ears, as if journeying thousands of miles from flowing sands. Deep-eyed with a purple beard, these two Huns people (foreign lads) dance and leap, presenting their greetings in front of the beams with the sound of drums” (Duan, Tang Dynasty). The poet vividly described the shape of the lion dance props and the state of the lion dance performance in the article. The “Huns people” represent the Northern barbarian tribes in ancient China, which shows that the lion dance has all the intersection with foreign cultures in the early period.

At the beginning of Qing Dynasty and the late Tang Dynasty, the lion dance was also spread to Japan. The “Xinxi Ancient Music Painting” recorded the dance movements and costumes of the Tang Dynasty, including the lion dance. This book can still be preserved in Japan today (Han, 1996). Su, H. the painter of the Northern Song Dynasty, has depicted the scene of children dancing lions in the Painting of Hundred Children Playing in Spring. It can be seen in the picture that the style of the lion dance is not consistent with the real appearance of the lion. The head and body of the lion are covered with cyan fur, but they are still realistic. This picture records the shape of the lion dance in the Northern Song Dynasty. It can also be inferred that the shape of the northern lion comes from here. With the development of history, the shape of the northern lion has gradually formed.

The Southern Lion refers to the lion dance in southern China. According to the data, the reason why the lion dance is divided into north and south is that some people migrated from the north to the south at that time, and the lion dance changed with the geographical transfer. The north and south cultures were blended with the lion dance, thus forming the division between the South Lion and the North Lion (Zeng,2011).



Figure 1.1: Hundreds of Children Playing in Spring (The colour of the silk version, 26.6 × 27.7cm, collected by the Palace Museum in Beijing, Baidu scholar, 2021)

In summary, lion dancing originated in the Han Dynasty, flourished during the Tang Dynasty, and gradually spread to the folk and became well-known to the public. However, due to its long history, there are not many pictorial records of lion dancing, which shows that although lion dancing was already popular in China during the Tang Dynasty, research on the appearance and colour of lion dancing has been relatively scarce in history.

Lion dance is a traditional dance in China, in which performers wear lion props and perform dance movements. It is a festive performance representing good luck and prosperity. Lion dance has developed for more than 2000 years and has become one of the most popular folk-art activities among the Chinese people. Although lion dance originated in China, it is not unique to China. As one of the excellent traditional cultures of Chinese democracy, lion dance culture can be found in corners of the world where there are Chinese people (Gong, 2004; Zeng, 2011). In northern China, there is the northern lion, and in southern China, there is the southern lion. Due to differences in customs and beliefs in different regions, there are significant differences in the appearance and performance of the northern and southern lions. Generally speaking, the lion dance in southern China focuses on the decoration of the lion, and its performance skills are more flexible. The northern lion focuses on the lion's dance steps and performance content, such as the Xu Water Lion Dance in Xushui, Baoding, Hebei, which has light and interesting dance steps, and their props have realistic shapes. The typical representative of the southern lion is the Awakening Lion in Foshan, Guangdong, which has excellent dance steps, and emphasizes drama and storytelling. Their props have abstract shapes and bright colour.

In China, lion dance is a traditional dance where performers wear lion costumes and perform the dance. It is a festive performance that represents good fortune and prosperity. With over 2000 years of development, lion dance has become one of the most popular folk-art activities in China, and has spread to Chinese communities worldwide. While lion dance originated in China, it is not limited to Chinese culture (Xiao,2021).

There are northern and southern lions in China, and there are significant differences in their appearance and performance due to regional customs and beliefs. Generally, southern lion dance focuses on the decoration of the lion, with more agile performance techniques. In contrast, northern lion dance focuses on the lion's dance steps and performance content, with more realistic-looking props, such as the Xushui lion dance from Hebei province.

As the lion dance made its way overseas, it evolved into region-specific variations due to geographical conditions, local customs, and historical transitions. There is no shortage of lion dance researchers abroad, with the majority centred in the Southeast Asian region. Malaysia's renowned lion dance craftsperson, Xiao Feihong, remarked: "Confining the lion dance culture to Chinese culture restricts its development; lion dance is a culture of all humanity". This statement does not question the origins of the lion dance culture but expresses hope for its future potential. Hence, Malaysia is also dubbed the "Hometown of Lion Dance". One particularly influential aspect of lion dance in the U.S. is the hybrid styles of lion head design and choreography observed in Singapore and Malaysia. These styles incorporate shorter tails, lighter construction materials, and more vibrant colours and designs. This hybrid lion dance has gained prominence through the annual Genting World Lion Dance Championship in Malaysia, where teams showcase highly - stylized routines atop poles and wires (Chang, 2013). Pan (2012) stated that lion dance culture is also immensely popular in Thailand. This is primarily due to the significant Chinese diaspora present there. On festive occasions or store openings, the Chinese in Thailand celebrate with lion dances. The instruments and props used for the dance are similar to those in

China. Zhou (2019) noted that the Chinese began settling in Cambodia during the Song Dynasty. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there was a sudden influx of Chinese immigrants to Cambodia, attributed to the mass exodus following the failure of anti-Qing movements. However, the Chinese diaspora, despite being in a foreign land, retained their longing for their homeland and wished for their descendants to inherit Chinese culture. As a result, they established lion dance troupes, marking the emergence of lion dance culture in Cambodia. Whether in ancient or modern times, in China or abroad, lion dance symbolizes good luck and prosperity, representing the good wishes of a region.

1.1.2 The Overview of Lion Dance Mask

Whether it's lion dance performances in China or abroad, lion dance props are always needed.

The lion dance performance props include gongs, drums, cymbals, lion heads, lion body, lion pants, jackets, embroidered balls, big-headed Buddha masks, sunflower fans, lettuce, and couplets. Different regions have their own unique lion dance props, for example, in northern lion dance performances, embroidered balls are often used to liven up the atmosphere; while in southern Awakening Lion performances, the actors wear large Buddha masks and swing sunflower fans to enhance the performance's appeal, without using embroidered balls. The props used in the northern lion dance performances are more realistic in shape, with the lion head, lion body, and lion pants often covered with fur, making them look more like real lions. On the other hand, the props used in the southern lion dance performances are more abstract in shape, with rich colours and more emphasis on the lion's posture. For the general public, people often judge the type of lion dance by

the lion head mask, which is the most representative part of the lion dance props. The shape, colour, patterns, and decorations of the lion head mask all represent the cultural and folk characteristics of a region.

Many people think that the southern lion is the same as the Awakening Lion (Jiang, 2007), but this is not the case. Since 2006, eight Guangdong lion dance performances have been officially included in the category of traditional dance of China's intangible cultural heritage, including three Awakening Lion performances in Guangdong: Foshan Awakening Lion, Suixi Awakening Lion, and Guangzhou Awakening Lion (Table 1.1). These lion dances have their own characteristics in terms of dance steps, props, and performance styles. People's understanding of lion dances is intuitive. The public knows lion dances, but their visual perception of lion dances is very limited.

The table lists 6 versions of Guangdong lion dance, including Guangdong dancing lion dance, Mat lion dance, green lion, Songgang Seven Star lion dance, Shangchuan Huang Liansheng lion dance, and Yao cloth bag wooden lion dance. The performance props used by the six lion dances are different. The Mat Lion Dance (Figure 1.2) uses mats as props and the performers' movements resemble those of a lion （Li et al., 2022); The Yao cloth bag wooden lion dance (Figure 1.3) uses a cloth bag and a wooden lion head, which looks clumsy and is nearly 4 meters long with room for multiple people inside（Liu, 2019); The Green Lion (Figure 1.4) is large in size, with a unique and colourful lion head that is neither as majestic and colourful as the traditional southern lion, nor as realistic and cute as the northern lion, but rather has a ferocious expression with eyes like bronze bells

(Zheng & Hu, 2017); The unique feature of the Songgang Seven Star Lion Dance (Figure 1.5) is its dance steps and music. “Seven stars” refers to the rhythm of the accompanying drums, which is seven and a half beats. The lion head used in this dance is similar to the Guangdong Awakening Lion head (Chen, 2019).

Table 1.1: Types of Lion Dance in Guangdong (Source: China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network)

Name	Publication time	Declaration area
Lion Dance (Guangdong Awakening Lion dance)	2006 (first batch)	Foshan City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Guangdong Awakening Lion Dance)	2006 (first batch)	Suixi County, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Guangdong Awakening Lion Dance)	2006 (first batch)	Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Mat Lion Dance)	2008 (second batch)	Meizhou City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Green Lion Dance)	2011 (third batch)	Jieyang City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Songgang Seven Star Lion Dance)	2011 (third batch)	Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Shangchuan Huanglian Wins Lion Dancee)	2021 (Fifth batch)	Bao’an District, Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province
Lion Dance (Yao cloth Bag Wooden Lion Dance)	2021 (Fifth batch)	Lianzhou City, Qingyuan City, Guangdong Province

The Guangdong Awakening Lion is the most representative of the southern lion and is the most well-known traditional dance in Guangdong. The types of Guangdong lion dances mentioned above are classified based on their dance characteristics. However, the subject of this study is the lion dance masks that correspond to the Guangdong Awakening Lion.



Figure 1.2: Mat Lion Dance (Baidu Scholar , 2022)



Figure 1.3: Yao Cloth Bag Wooden Lion Dance (Baidu Scholar , 2022)



Figure 1.4: Green Lion (Baidu Scholar , 2022)



Figure 1.5: Songgang Seven Star Lion Dance (Baidu Scholar , 2022)

The appearance of the lion head masks exhibits pronounced regional characteristics, allowing the general public to discern the type of lion dance based on the mask's style. Lion head masks from Guangdong, often referred to as lion dance masks, lion heads, or simply lion masks, are Unique mascot of the region. The most representative of these is the Foshan Lion Head, which, in 2008, was inscribed on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in traditional arts. Both the Suixi and Guangzhou Lion Head mask crafts have been designated as provincial-level intangible cultural heritage projects of Guangdong, while the Heshan Lion Head craft is recognized at the municipal level in Jiangmen. While Guangdong lion dance is a traditional dance category, lion head crafting falls under traditional arts. Performers of the Guangdong lion dance utilize these crafted lion heads as props. The artistry of making lion masks is not exclusive to Guangdong; regions like

Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand also host workshops for lion mask production, with their products being highly esteemed by lion dance performers.

1.2 Problem Statement

The intangible cultural heritage of Guangdong's lion dance and lion head craftsmanship are interdependent; the demand for lion head production arises from lion dance activities. Projects related to lion dance in Guangdong have garnered significant support within China's concerted efforts to promote intangible cultural heritage. Governmental support policies have increased awareness among younger generations and allowed many businesses to capitalize on this momentum. Numerous merchants, riding on the wave of intangible heritage, have designed a plethora of related souvenirs utilizing the lion dance imagery, placed lion dance masks as decoration in their shops, and created various posters and illustrations employing its visual representation. Ma et al. (2023) states, In the process of modernization, the traditional skills of the Southern Awakening Lion are at risk of being lost. During the interviews and on-the-spot investigations, the researcher also discovered significant discrepancies between the artisans' understanding of lion head production and the general public's perception of it. While the people of Guangdong are familiar with the lion masks, the vast majority remain uninformed about the broader lion dance culture. Yang et al. (2023) argue that in the face of severe losses in rural culture and a fragmentation of cultural identity among rural communities, exploring the connection between Guangdong's Awakening Lion and cultural identity, and uncovering its enduring mechanisms within society, holds significant value for nurturing individual local awareness, enhancing rural affection, and strengthening cultural identity.

The design, colour, patterns, and decoration of Guangdong lion masks blend elements of southern Chinese folk culture and characteristics. For most, the symbolic significance of these visual elements is vague, with the general understanding of the lion dance centring around the salient meanings of "auspiciousness" and "prosperity". In reality, besides these, lion dance culture embodies a plethora of meanings, such as loyalty, filial piety, respect, and various emotions like impulsiveness and sorrow. These are the quintessential facets of Chinese lion dance culture.

However, due to foreign cultural influences, lack of communication among lion head craftsmen, and the public fragmented understanding of the lion dance culture, the visual elements of the lion dance masks have often been misapplied, leading to cultural misrepresentations. This has unfortunately cast a negative light on China's cultural exports.

It's understandable that the general public may lack understanding of this rich cultural tapestry, but when lion head craftsmen and designers themselves misinterpret the meanings of the visual elements of the masks, the cultural drift becomes a grave concern. The renowned local Foshan fashion brand 'Yinlintang HEA' has reinvented the visual elements of the lion dance, imprinting new lion designs on apparel with a label supporting Chinese culture. Qi (2020) remarked that 'Yinlintang HEA' captured the essence of the traditional lion mask, exaggerating its features in the reinterpretation, blending contemporary fashion elements and cartoonist expressions, thus appealing to the younger demographic. Extracting and repurposing traditional cultural visual elements for modern design is not uncommon today. However, it's imperative that these visual representations do not detach from the foundational meanings and cultural core of the traditional lion

dance. Wang and Du (2020) have posited, lion dance culture should be “based on tradition, pioneering and innovative”, and establish a system congruent with the inheritance and evolution of modern lion dance culture. The symbolsindicated by these visual elements must reflect their inherent cultural implications. Mere extraction of visual motifs, their misapplication, and the propagation of misguided cultural interpretations can detrimentally affect the preservation, inheritance, and growth of the lion dance culture, giving rise to a distorted, pseudo-cultural understanding, especially among younger generations.



Figure 1.6: Banner of the website of Yinlintang HEA (HEA Official Website, 2022)

Figure1.6 originates from the official HEA website. The lion head design is endearing, utilizing vibrant colours, and has gained significant popularity among younger audiences. However, a discerning viewer may observe certain stylistic details in the central lion head design that seem incongruent with traditional Chinese culture. For instance, the eyebrow and tongue piercings evident in the lion are not rooted in traditional Chinese motifs.

This study prioritizes the morphology, colouration, patterns, and decorations of the Guangdong lion dance masks, presenting a high degree of research complexity. There are primarily four reasons for this: Firstly, literature on the craftsmanship of lion head masks is sparse. The techniques and traditions held by artisans largely lack textual documentation and have been perpetuated primarily through oral transmission. Thus, this craft and its encompassing culture have naturally evolved over time, making it challenging to trace its traditional origins. As a local Guangdong culture, the archives of the province contain limited records on dragon and lion dance. The bulk of documentation has suffered degradation due to natural elements and preservation oversight. There is a pressing need to reconsider conventional value systems and establish archiving and preservation standards specific to the dragon and lion dance (Zeng & Cheng, 2018). Secondly, each mask creator incorporates personal aesthetic preferences when designing, a process reminiscent of artistic creation. Standardized lion dance characters exhibit variability across artisans. While innovative lion designs maintain structural similarities, their colour schemes have mostly eschewed traditional significance, emphasizing visual impact instead. Thirdly, in the realm of lion head craftsmanship, particularly colouration, there aren't stringent guidelines. The choice of colour has evolved over time, influenced by the era's conventions and individual artisan preferences, rendering categorization difficult. Lastly, Scholarly examination of specific patterns on lion masks is limited. In conventional displays, designs on the masks aren't pronounced; the mask's overall shape suffices for identification. Given the diversity of patterns, artisans employ a variety of colours to depict them, resulting in a somewhat spontaneous appearance.

Indeed, on lion masks, various visual symbols convey distinct meanings. When creators focus solely on visual appeal, sidelining the symbolic significance, it poses a detriment to the preservation and propagation of this rich cultural heritage.

1.3 Research Gap

The research gap identified in the context of Guangdong lion mask creation and its cultural interpretation primarily revolves around several critical issues that hinder the accurate transmission and modern adaptation of this traditional Chinese cultural symbol.

i. Lack of Documentation and Formal Archives

Traditional skills related to lion mask making are predominantly passed down orally, without comprehensive written records. This practice, while preserving the essence of oral traditions, poses significant challenges in maintaining a consistent and traceable lineage of the craft. Furthermore, the scarcity of documented research in Guangdong's local archives exacerbates the difficulty in studying the evolution and nuances of lion dance culture historically. This gap in formal documentation means that changes and adaptations in the craft over time are hard to track and analyze rigorously.

ii. Individual Artistic Interpretation versus Collective Cultural Representation

Each artisan infuses personal aesthetic preferences into the creation of lion masks, which, while contributing to creative diversity, may lead to deviations from traditional designs that carry specific cultural significances. This individualistic approach to craftsmanship reflects a broader issue akin to that faced in many forms of artistic creation,

where the balance between personal expression and adherence to traditional cultural representations becomes challenging to maintain.

iii. Modernization and Loss of Traditional colour Symbolism

In the contemporary process of making lion masks, traditional colour schemes, which once held specific cultural meanings, are often altered to prioritize visual appeal over symbolic accuracy. The evolution of materials and pigments used, influenced by modern availability and preferences, further contributes to this shift away from traditional colours, thus diluting the cultural authenticity of the masks.

iv. Underrepresentation of Specific Symbolic Patterns

Research and visibility of specific patterns and their meanings on lion masks are notably limited. This underrepresentation means that significant cultural symbols might be overlooked or misrepresented in mainstream presentations and adaptations of lion masks. The patterns that do exist are often chosen for their aesthetic appeal rather than their cultural significance, which can lead to a superficial understanding and appreciation of the masks.

v. Commercialization and Cultural Dilution

As lion dance culture gains popularity, there is an increasing trend to commercialize and adapt its elements for mass consumption. While this has the potential to spread cultural awareness, it often leads to a dilution of the traditional meanings and significance associated with the lion masks. Products such as apparel and decorative items

might adopt visual elements of the lion dance without fully conveying or respecting their cultural contexts and implications.

To address these gaps, future research needs to focus on creating a robust archival system for lion dance culture, enhancing communication between generations of artisans, and educating both creators and the public about the deep cultural meanings embedded in lion masks. Moreover, developing a standardized methodology for documenting and analyzing traditional and contemporary practices can help maintain the cultural integrity of the lion dance as it adapts to modern contexts.

1.4 Research Questions

Given the aforementioned challenges and issues, it is imperative for the researcher to delve deeply into the visual elements and cultural significance of the Guangdong lion dance masks. The methods of inheriting the construction of the lion's head, the choice of colours and patterns on it, as well as the cultural implications and messages conveyed by these elements, are currently focal points of this study. Amidst a backdrop where a vast amount of traditional culture is being redefined and commercialized in contemporary society, ensuring the authenticity and integrity of the lion dance culture becomes a paramount task. To address these challenges and to preserve and promote the traditional culture of the Guangdong lion dance, this study has outlined the following research questions:

i. What specific visual elements are present in the Guangdong lion dance masks?

ii. What are the meaning of symbols traced in Awakening Lion Mask in a context of traditional culture of China?

iii. How can a comprehensive framework be developed to provide reliable data support for government officials, artists, and researchers of traditional culture?

1.5 Research Objective

Correspondingly, the research objectives are:

i. To identify the specific visual elements present in the Guangdong awakening lion mask , including its shape, colour, pattern, and decoration.

ii. To investigate the “index” and “symbols” conveyed by the visual elements in awakening lion mask.

iii. To provide a relatively complete framework that can provide reliable data support for the government, art creators, and traditional culture researchers.

Throughout the research process, the researcher must constantly bear in mind these research questions and objectives. Firstly, when collecting and analysing each visual element, researchers should ensure the reliability of their sources, avoiding misconceptions or biases that may lead to incorrect interpretations.

Furthermore, the lion head culture of Guangdong lion dance has integrated various cultural elements over historical and geographical transitions. This demands caution from the researcher during interpretation, to prevent oversimplification or distortion.

Additionally, when analysing data, geographical differences and historical context must be considered. Different regions might have variances in the evolution and development of the lion dance culture. For instance, past and present lion dance cultures may diverge in certain aspects. Thus, it's crucial to ensure consistent reference backgrounds during analysis.

In the quest to explore the visual elements and cultural significance of the Guangdong lion dance masks, the researcher should attend to details, ensuring the precision and depth of the research. An open-minded approach should be adopted, actively seeking diverse opinions and suggestions, with the aim of achieving a more comprehensive and insightful research outcome.

1.6 Research Framework

To more clearly present the design logic of this study, the researcher has depicted the research framework as a flowchart (Figure 1.7). As illustrated, this study is broadly divided into four phases: sample selection, data collection & analysis, understanding and exploration. The fisrt phase is to discuss the selection of the samples. The second phase constitutes the core of the study, encompassing the specific methodologies for data collection and analysis. The third phase involves the discussion and extraction of findings. The final stage culminates in the synthesis and formulation of recommendations.

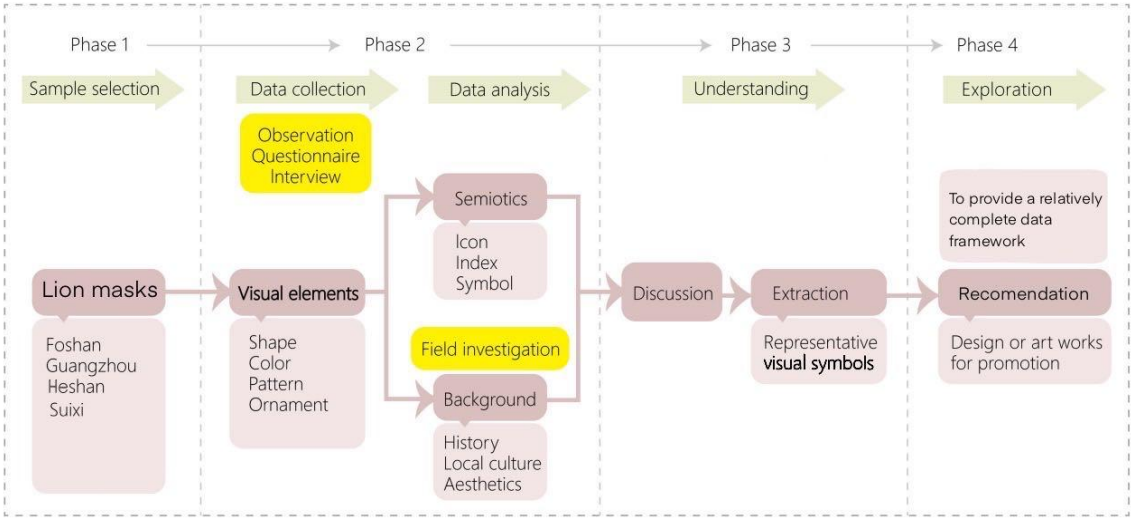


Figure 1.7: The Research Framework of the Study (by Zhan)

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is developed and expanded based on Charles S. Peirce's principles of semiotics. This framework robustly supports the analysis of visual symbols in Guangdong's Awakening Lion's Head Masks. The study initiates by examining the visual elements (shape, Colour, pattern, and decoration) of these mask to base the analysis of their visual symbols, thus uncovering the historical presence, development, and social significance of lion head culture in the Guangdong region. This inquiry ultimately focuses on the core topic "Visual Symbols of Guangdong Lion Head Masks". (Figure1.8)

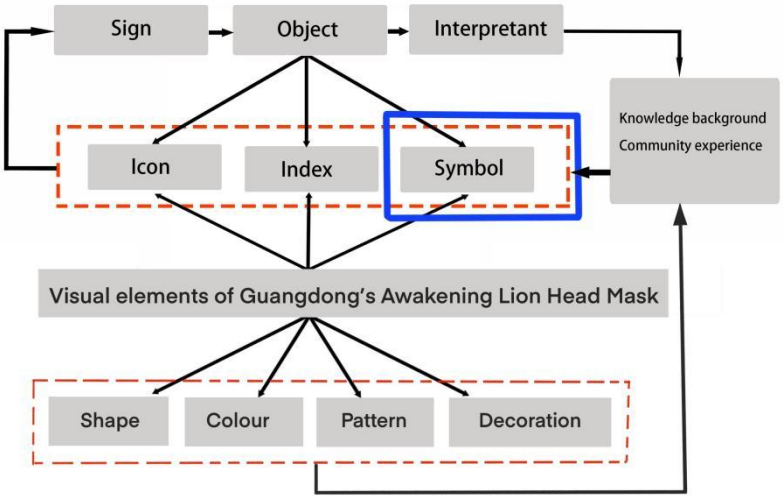


Figure 1.8: The Theoretical Framework of the Study (by Zhan)

Peirce's semiotics examines the nature and function of signs in communication. His triadic model posits that signs are anything that conveys meaning to an interpreter, rather than being the signs themselves (Peirce, 1998). He categorizes signs into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Within this research, each visual element of the Guangdong lion head mask is treated as a sign capable of conveying specific cultural, traditional, and social meanings. Detailed analysis will be elaborated in Chapter Four.

The application of Peirce's semiotics enables us to analyze structurally how these masks function as communication tools within their cultural milieu. It allows the thesis to systematically break down the visual language of the masks into interpretable units, exploring how these units function collectively to convey layered and complex cultural narratives. This semiotic approach is crucial for uncovering the intrinsic links between the visual symbols of the masks and the cultural identities, values, and histories of the people of Guangdong Province. Through this lens, the study not only documents but also

interprets the cultural and historical significance of the masks, contributing to broader discussions on cultural heritage, preservation, and identity in the dynamic contexts of modernity and globalization. Thus, this theoretical framework supports the overall objective of the research, which is to establish a comprehensive and reliable data framework for the visual symbols of the Guangdong lion dance masks, ensuring their effective protection, promotion, and development as a cherished cultural heritage.

1.8 Operational terms

To ensure clarity and precision throughout this study, it is crucial to define several key operational terms used in the context of the research. Here are detailed explanations of the operational terms pertinent to this study:

1. Visual Elements: These refer to the fundamental components that constitute the visible parts of the Guangdong lion head masks, interacting through their shape, colour, pattern, and decoration to create the mask's overall visual impression. Visual elements are the physical attributes of mask design that observers can directly perceive.

2. Shape: Specific dimensions, proportions, and visual characteristics of the lion head mask, including the overall silhouette and structural features that constitute its visual identity. This is further broken down into the form, size, proportions, and structure of the mask’s cheeks, nose, mouth, ears, eyes, and horns.

3. Colour: The colours applied on the lion head masks. This study discusses not the specific pigments used but rather the combinations, proportions, and application contexts of colours.

4. Pattern: The designs applied to the lion head masks. The discussion includes the size, arrangement, placement, and application contexts of these patterns.

5. Decoration: Additional decorative or artistic details added to the mask, such as pompoms, mirrors, stickers, and other materials.

6. Visual Symbols: These are visual elements that carry deep cultural, traditional, or social meanings, communicating specific information to observers through symbols, hints, or expressions. Visual symbols transcend physical properties and delve into deeper cultural contexts and interpretations.

7. Semiotics: A study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior, proposed by Charles S. Peirce (1998). This includes analyzing how signs represent objects and convey meanings, a concept that will be elaborated in the "Theoretical adopted in the study" section of Chapter Two.

8. Icon, Index, Symbol: Categories of signs in Peirce's semiotics. Icons resemble the things they signify, indexes show some physical or causal connection to their objects, and symbols are meanings acquired culturally. This concept will also be detailed in the "Theoretical adopted in the study" section of Chapter Two.

9. Cultural Narrative: Embedded stories and traditions in the symbols of the lion head masks, influencing and reflecting the cultural identity of the community.

10. Interpretant: The meaning or concept that arises in the mind of an observer when encountering a sign (in this case, the symbols on the lion head masks).

By operationally defining these terms, the study ensures that each aspect is clearly understood and accurately applied throughout the research process, providing consistency and depth in the analysis of the visual symbols of the Guangdong lion head masks.

1.9 Scope and Limitations

In the realm of lion dance, there is a saying: Where there are Chinese, there is the lion dance. Lion dance performances are not only popular in China but also leave their footprints in overseas Chinese communities. Activities involving lion dance can be observed in Chinatown in New York and are no strangers to areas in Malaysia where the Chinese community resides.

The lion mask “Old Master”crafted by Malaysia’s renowned lion head artisan, Lin, M.G, has garnered immense admiration from the public. Its design has inspired numerous craftsmen in mainland China to emulate. Another distinguished figure from Malaysia, Master Xiao, F.H. referred to as the ‘Lion Man’, personally imparts lion dance lessons and crafts durable and aesthetically pleasing lion masks. Master Xiao contends, “Lion dance embodies an inclusive cultural art form, a universal culture, and should not mandate foreigners to learn according to Chinese customs” (Zhu,2021). Master Xiao’s perspective slightly diverges from those of craftsmen in mainland China. The lion masks he crafts employ novel techniques and unique materials, embodying a distinct aesthetic. Given the geographical location of “Wan Sheng Studio” in West Malaysia, it was challenging for the researcher to conduct on-site research. It has been understood that lion dance troupes in Guangzhou have their lion heads custom-made from “Wan Sheng Studio”. By combining

on-the-ground investigations with the specialized writings of Master Xiao, the researcher was able to obtain foundational data on the "Heshan-style Lion" produced in Malaysia.

Representatives of the Guangdong lion dance include Foshan, Suixi, and Guangzhou. However, the lion masks used by dance troupes do not solely originate from these three locales. For instance, Heshan, the birthplace of the Heshan lion mask, stands as a pivotal region in lion mask production. Hence, research on Heshan's lion masks remains indispensable. Furthermore, numerous workshops craft lion heads in the Guangdong region, ranging from large factories to smaller establishments. It is unfeasible for researchers to investigate each. Thus, in selecting research areas, it is vital to liaise with local cultural institutions to reach esteemed and historically rooted workshops. Foshan, as the cradle of lion dance, is a primary focus of the research. The form, colour, patterns, and decorations of lion masks can trace their historical roots and evolution in Foshan's workshops and local museums. The Suixi Lion Dance Intangible Heritage Station emerges as the secondary research site. Located along the coast of western Guangdong, Suixi's lion dance performance exhibits distinct variations from those of Foshan and Guangzhou. Variations in dance movements lead performers to adopt different prop usage habits, culminating in unique lion mask designs. Guangzhou has fewer lion mask workshops compared to Foshan. The masks produced by Guangzhou's craftsmen closely resemble those from Foshan. Minor deviations arise from individual craftsmen's styling perceptions and crafting habits. Thus, the researcher's data collection scope for Guangzhou encompasses visiting lion dancers in Guangzhou villages, attending intangible heritage exhibitions of Guangzhou lion masks, and observing Guangzhou lion dance performances.

While the narrowing scope of the research might potentially result in a less comprehensive understanding, the samples collected during visits to inheritors' studios and museums are quite representative. Consequently, the data and findings from the research adequately showcase the distinct visual features of the Guangdong awakening lion dance masks.

1.10 Research Significance

Article 33 of the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (2011) states that the state encourages scientific and technological research related to intangible cultural heritage, as well as research on methods of protection and preservation. The state also encourages activities such as recording and publishing representative projects of intangible cultural heritage. In the “Outline of the Cultural Development and Reform Plan during the 13th Five-Year Plan period” of the Chinese government, it is emphasized to “inherit and promote outstanding traditional Chinese culture” and to “strengthen the research, excavation, and innovative development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture”. In today’s society where the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage is highly valued, the systematic sorting and study of the visual elements of the Guangdong lion dance has significant practical and historical significance. Firstly, this research will help people understand more about the visual elements and cultural connotations of the Guangdong lion dance, broaden the audience’s understanding of the lion dance, and promote the further development of lion dance culture. Secondly, visual symbols have the power to convey complex meanings and cultural values. By analysing the visual symbols of the Guangdong lion mask,

researchers can better understand the cultural meanings inherent in this art form. The promotion and development of the lion dance lion head culture requires more scholars to study and explore the cultural connotations and certain spiritual appeals behind its visual elements. Thirdly, organizing and summarizing the relevant data on this research, and integrating the visual elements of the lion dance mask into artistic creation, promotion, and publishing, can effectively save material resources and funds for the promotion of Guangdong lion dance culture. Therefore, by leveraging different media to better convey and promote the culture of the Guangdong lion dance mask, it can play a positive role in the inheritance, protection, and development of lion dance culture.

In conclusion, delving into the visual symbols of the Guangdong lion masks holds profound significance. Such an inquiry not only illuminates the rich tapestry of cultural heritage and artistic expressions ingrained in these masks but also provides invaluable insights into the evolution and adaptation of traditional practices in contemporary contexts. This exploration bridges historical reverence with modern understanding, thereby enriching our appreciation and fostering a deeper connection to this emblematic aspect of Guangdong culture.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

An in-depth reading and meticulous analysis of relevant literature can aid researchers in acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the current research progress and mainstream views on themes like “Guangdong Lion Dance”, “Lion Dance Culture”, and “Visual Symbols of Lion Head Masks” from both domestic and foreign scholars. Identifying the knowledge gaps and unexplored issues in these academic fields can pave the way for new research paths and directions in this study.

Initially, through the review of various academic papers and journals related to this research, the current state of research can be comprehended. The researcher will further delve into the theoretical frameworks relied upon by other scholars during their research, as well as the methodologies they employed. Throughout the process of analysing literature, attention needs to be paid to how qualitative or quantitative research is used for data collection and analysis, and the tools and methods adopted in data analysis. Collecting and organizing this information enables the researcher to understand and grasp the latest methodologies and research trends in this field.

By reviewing and analysing these documents, the researcher can learn from and draw upon the research experiences and achievements of others, and then choose the most suitable theoretical framework and research method in line with the specific features and requirements of this research topic. Overall, this process not only assists researchers in

systematically understanding and mastering the current academic status but also provides powerful theoretical support and practical guidance for this study.

Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual framework of the literature review section.

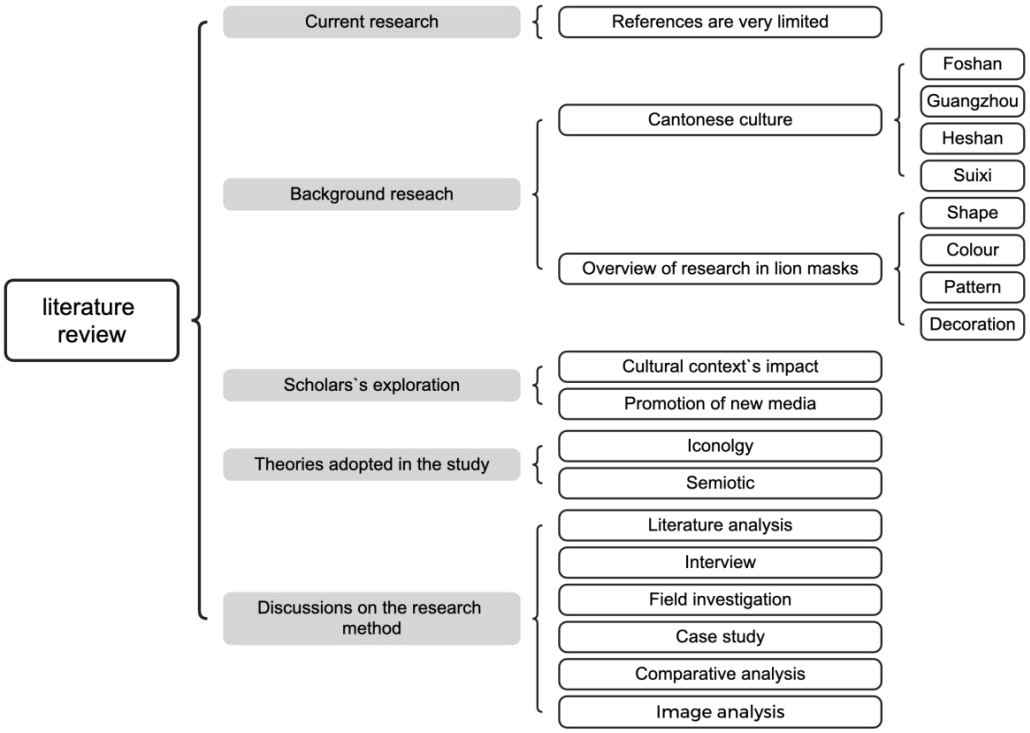


Figure 2.1: Organizational Charts of the Literature Review (by Zhan)

2.2 Current Research on Visual Elements of Guangdong Lion Dance Head

Since the promulgation of the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2011), researchers' attention to intangible cultural heritage projects has been steadily increasing. However, as of July 24, 2023, a search for the keyword "lion dance" on the researcheritative Chinese academic paper search website "CNKI" only yielded 336 published journals, papers, conferences, and yearbooks, among which, only 56 were journals and papers. If the search topic is limited to "lion dance" AND

"visual", there are only 21 related documents. It is evident that there are very few studies that analyse the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance masks. Domestic research on the theme of "lion dance" mainly focuses on topics inclined towards cultural inheritance and protection, such as "historical introduction", "lion dance as a traditional dance performance method", "lion dance IP design", "origins of lion dance culture", and "protection and development of lion dance culture". When searching for "lion dance" AND "visual" in Google Scholar and Scopus, there are even fewer highly relevant journals and papers, mostly concentrating on themes such as "revitalizing traditional culture through new media" and "the development of lion dance as Chinese culture abroad", tending towards the direction of cultural development and new models, as well as comparative cultural studies such as "similarities and differences in lion dance culture representing Chinese culture under various religious, cultural, political, and economic systems in different countries" (Tan, 2018).

2.2.1 Background Research on Lion Dance Culture

The Lion Dance prevalent in the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong, known as Southern Lion Dance, is a unique form of Chinese Lion Dance and deeply rooted in the cultural milieu of Cantonese culture. Social customs significantly influence regional art styles. Gong (1999) particularly emphasized the element of Lion Dance in his exploration of Cantonese culture. He extensively studied the historical evolution and current status of Cantonese culture and unequivocally stated that Lion Dance is a significant substream in Cantonese culture, emphasizing its position in both history and the present. Similarly, Gong (1999); Zhang & Li (2023) pointed out that the Lion Dance, as a representative cultural symbol of the Cantonese region, has its unique cultural connotation and symbolic

features.

The Lion Dance in Cantonese culture serves multiple functions. Firstly, it drives community building and enhances community cohesion through community organization and participation. Secondly, as an art form, Lion Dance integrates various artistic elements, showcasing the aesthetic qualities of Cantonese culture. Furthermore, it plays a critical role in all kinds of celebrations and ceremonies, bringing luck and joy to these events. Simultaneously, the Lion Dance is an important vehicle for the transmission of Cantonese culture. Through the spread and participation in Lion Dance activities, Cantonese culture continues unbroken. Finally, the Lion Dance serves as a bridge for cultural exchange, showcasing the cultural characteristics of Canton (and even China) to the world.

Zeng (2004) conducted interviews with the leaders, lion dancers, and inheritors of the awakening lion and dragon dance teams in the Guangfu region. Through these interactions, he discerned the widespread popularity of the awakening lion dance in Guangzhou and the broader Guangfu area. Remarkably, almost every village in the Guangfu region, characterized by settlements based on surnames, boasts its own local lion dance team. She discovered that, be it village celebrations or ancestral temple activities, the Lion Dance is an indispensable part. The Lion Dance not only brings symbols of good luck to these activities but also reflects the Cantonese people's aspirations and yearnings for a good life. Therefore, many scholars generally agree that Lion Dance culture has a close relationship with Cantonese culture, the main body of Lingnan culture, providing an important clue for further exploring the origin and background of Lion Dance culture (Zeng, 2004).

Guangdong Province is located in the southern part of China（Figure 2.2）, yet not all areas within the province are recognized as Cantonese-speaking regions. According to the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2022, there were 72 languages spoken in the province. The linguistic landscape primarily consists of three major Chinese dialect groups: Cantonese, Hakka, and Min. Additionally, in remote areas beyond the Pearl River Delta, local dialects such as old language of South Canton, She Language, and Mandarin are also prevalent. The regions predominantly speaking the Cantonese dialect are located in central and southwestern Guangdong, including cities like Guangzhou, Foshan, and Maoming et. Figure 2.3 shows a map of Guangdong Province in China, with the areas circled in red representing the regions studied for lion head culture in this research. The specific reasons for this regional focus have been clearly stated in the "Scope and Limitations" section of Chapter One. Lion Dance is mainly popular in the "Cantonese-speaking" areas of the Pearl River Delta, Central Guangdong, and Western Guangdong (Liao and Lei, 2016). Cantonese culture is also an important branch of Cantonese culture. In fact, many details in Lion Dance culture are directly related to "Cantonese culture". When discussing popular culture in Guangzhou, Bai, H. (2006) pointed out that Lion Dance performances are traditional customs in the Lingnan region. In Cantonese, the words "lettuce" and "making money" sound similar. Therefore, the "lettuce" prop used in the Lion Dance "picking greens" ceremony is endowed with the auspicious meaning of "making money" and "getting rich". Xie (2021) holds the same view. He further interprets "picking greens" as symbolizing "business" and "vitality". The "picking greens" ceremony in the Guangdong region also implies "adding members to the family". Besides, the Lion Dance has intricate connections with other cultures in the Cantonese-

speaking regions (Bai, 2006; Xie, 2021).



Figure 2.2: Map of the People's Republic of China（Official website of the Ministry of Natural Resources, 2023）



Figure 2.3: Map of Guangdong Province, China（Official website of the Ministry of Natural Resources,2023）

The large-scale ethnic dance drama "Awakening the Lion" in 2018 incorporated Guangdong's Cantonese opera, Wing Chun, Ying dance, and other regional cultural symbols into the performance. The performance received widespread attention and praise

nationwide. The drama took “Awakening the Lion” as the theme and conveyed ethnic feelings to the public in the form of contemporary Chinese dance drama, highlighting the brave spirit of the Lingnan people (Wang, 2023). It can be seen that Lion Dance culture symbolizes the spiritual sustenance and heroism of the Guangdong region.

The scope of this study includes the Lion Dance of Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi (Figure 2.4). Foshan is also part of the Cantonese-speaking region and is the birthplace of the Lion Dance. Foshan folk expert Yu (2015) introduced the origin of Foshan’s Lion Dance and the opportunities for its rise, giving the public a more comprehensive understanding of Lion Dance culture. She said that the Lion Dance not only represents celebration and prosperity but also represents the faith of the Guangdong people in our country’s traditional culture (Yu, 2015).



Figure 2.4: The Styles of Lion Heads from Four regions in Guangdong (by Zhan)

The key points of this study are “Guangdong Lion Dance”, “lion head mask”, and “visual symbols”. Visual symbols have a close relationship with cultural beliefs and regional customs. Therefore, this study needs to be based on the “relationship between

visual elements and regional culture, traditional culture". Xie Zhongyuan, the director of Guangdong Intangible Cultural Heritage Research Base, has a broader understanding of Lion Dance culture. He said: Guangdong lion dance and Nuo rituals (Originating from the ancient Nuo ritual with the main purpose of exorcising ghosts and epidemics) were integrated in the Qing Dynasty. Over time, lion dance performances gradually became entertainment programs, and there was no trace of Nuo rituals in form (Xie, 2021). He also believes that the collective needs of lion dance performers and users are the key to the survival of Lion Dance culture (Xie, 2022). Admittedly, both points he proposed are closely related to Lion Dance visual symbols. The transformation of Lion Dance activities from driving away evil spirits to entertainment programs implies that the visual form of props used in Lion Dance activities will change. Moreover, the lion dancers and users deeply acknowledge the function of Lion Dance to bless luck. Therefore, the visual elements of the lion head mask carrying the Lion Dance culture also need to keep in sync with the faith of the lion dancers and users.

Suixi Lion Dance, located in the coastal region of western Guangdong where Cantonese is spoken, has its unique cultural background. Su (2007) mentions the influence of maritime culture on the assertive and robust dance steps of Suixi Lion Dance, the tenacious spirit of fighting against heaven and earth in the maritime culture can be felt through the dancing of the lion's head mask. Qi (2011) also claims that the market operation model of Suixi Lion Dance has brought lion dance culture to the international stage, earning global recognition. This includes lion dance performances, lion dance cultural tourism activities, and lion head performance props. Mao (2017) posits that the system composed of historical inheritance, aesthetic art, and economic development of

Suixi Lion Dance is key to opening up a new pattern for the lion dance cultural industry. Yu (2020), who shares the same viewpoint, believes that Suixi Lion Dance, while retaining the cultural foundation of Northern Lion, also incorporates local elements. Besides incorporating Southern martial arts into its performance form, the appearance of Suixi Lion Head also offers a visual impact with the majesty of the king of beasts. Zhang (2020) analysed Suixi culture from the perspective of symbiotic theory, and he thinks that the semi-fishing and semi-farming maritime culture, immigrant culture with Central Plains genes, clan culture in an enclaved way, and complex religious culture provide necessary safeguards for the characteristic development of Suixi Lion Dance culture. Scholars generally agree that the domineering temperament of Suixi Lion Dance culture has a close relationship with the inclusive maritime culture. Meanwhile, the Suixi Lion Head culture, which belongs to the Suixi Lion Dance culture, is also influenced.

Heshan Lion Dance originated from Foshan Lion Dance in the late Qing Dynasty, and its dance steps and prop making were created by Feng Gengzhang of Heshan (Liang, 2023). Today, Heshan Lion Dance and Heshan Lion Head are both intangible cultural heritage at the city level in Jiangmen, Guangdong Province. In China, there is not much attention paid to Heshan Lion Dance culture, but it has gained wide attention in Southeast Asia. Li (1999) claims that lion dance performances and lion dance props used in Singapore were introduced from Heshan, China, and the “roots” of Singapore’s Heshan Lion Dance lie in Heshan, all of which are inherited from Feng Gengzhang, the Lion King of Guangdong. Huang (2017) said, “Compared with China, Chinese lion dance in Singapore has more diversity, popularity, and daily life”. He suggests that the political stability and good economic development of Singapore provide favourable conditions for

the preservation and development of Chinese lion dance in Singapore. Singapore is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multireligious immigrant country, which can embrace diverse cultures and has an open and encouraging attitude towards them, hence traditional Chinese dragon and lion culture can be inherited and developed in Singapore (Xiong et al., 2020). A similar situation can be found in the lion dance culture of Malaysia. When lion dance first arrived in Malaysia, it was not paid much attention to, and it was stated by the then Interior Minister Gashari that "lion dance lacks local characteristics of Malaysia and should not be accepted as national culture", which aroused dissatisfaction among the Chinese community. Afterwards, Chinese in Malaysia regarded the lion dance custom as a "matter of national dignity", and used it as a cultural means to "stir up Chinese resistance and invigorate", laying the foundation for lion dance culture to flourish in Malaysia (Mo, 2010). Tan (2018) explores why lion dance, as a traditional culture of the Chinese nation, was recognized in its local development process after it entered Malaysia. The lion dance culture brought by Chinese ancestors to the South Seas is well preserved in Malaysia and has achieved development (Lei and Zhang, 2020). Chang (2013) mentions that in the mid-19th century, lion dance also entered the areas where Chinese people lived in the United States due to mass migration from southern China, but due to differences in props and teaching methods, there are considerable differences between the lion dance performed in the United States and those in mainland China. A particularly significant influence on American lion dance is the hybrid style of Singaporean and Malaysia Lion head design and dance. In prop design, they prefer shorter tails, lighter materials, and brighter colours. The lion head design from Malaysia is known worldwide, but its core still originates from ancient Chinese culture. It can be seen that Heshan Lion Dance culture has a great relationship with Foshan Lion Dance and the political and cultural background of

Southeast Asian countries.

Through the collation of the above literature, the researcher understands that whether in the past or at present, researchers pay great attention to the study of the background culture in the field when studying lion dance culture. Traditional Chinese culture has its unique, rich cultural heritage, and historical origins, so understanding the background of lion dance culture is crucial to this study.

2.2.2 Overview of the Research of Lion Head Mask

In the study of lion dance culture in China, some scholars believe that the core concept of the lion awakening lies in performance, namely dance steps and skills. However, others suggest that it requires concerted effort in multiple directions to propel the development of lion dance culture (Li, 2023; Zhou, 2024).

The relationship between the lion's head mask and cultural output is closely intertwined. According to the background introduction, the lion's head masks in the Guangdong region are made through a process of "tying, pasting, painting, and embellishing". Based on the four steps of production, visual elements of the lion's head masks can be categorized into their shape, colour, pattern, and decoration (Li, 2023). However, in the study of the awakening lion dance, research in the visual domain remains underrepresented. This can be attributed to the scarcity of data on "lion head crafting" as a folk art, which poses significant challenges to investigation(Zhang and Yang, 2024).

Despite the importance of the lion's head mask in art and cultural studies, in-depth research into its visual symbols is relatively scarce. For most, studies only extend to basic descriptions of its shape or colour (Zhou, 2024). Scholarly descriptions of the lion's head

shape tend to be broad. As noted by Wu and Wang (2021), the lion dance originated from the Northern lion, but the stylistic image transitions from literal to thoughtful, and the shape is exaggerated and imaginative with dramatic characteristics. However, these descriptions remain abstract, without detailed introductions to the design details, origins, or implied meanings of the mask's shape.

Li (2017) analysed the origin of the lion's horn in the Lingnan lion dance, stating that the shape was a fusion of characteristics from lions and unicorns. The unique single-horned lion design originated from a legend that during the early Ming Dynasty, a fearsome unicorn appeared in Foshan. People made a lion with a single horn out of bamboo and paper, and frightened the monster away with gongs and firecrackers. Since then, the single-horned lion has become a mascot for warding off evil and disasters. However, the paper does not explicitly cite the source of the legend, and there is no further analysis of the horn's shape in this chapter.

Research on the colour of the Lingnan lion also features various interpretations. Li (2017) analysed the colours of the lion's heads representing the Three Kingdoms' characters Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei in Cantonese opera. He pointed out that the colours of the lion's head masks were derived from the face colours of historical characters in Cantonese opera. In contrast, Zeng (2017) pointed out that the character Liu Bei, typically represented in traditional Chinese opera as a Laosheng role with a plain face, is symbolized in the lion dance by the colour yellow, which represents his imperial status. Scholars such as Huang (2021), Zhu (2022), and Xie (2023) all stated that the Liu Bei lion is characterized by a "yellow face with a white beard". Yin (2018) also sorted out the colours of the lion's heads of "Liu, Guan, and Zhang", but there are noticeable differences

between her descriptions and the accompanying images.

Lin (1993) analysed the decorative effects and styles of Foshan Lion Heads, covering aspects like the meaning, characteristics, and style of the decorative images, introducing some visual elements of Foshan lion dance masks to the readers, but the analysis is not comprehensive. He described in his book the use of Tang floral patterns on the lion head, “These are composed of several main patterns, following the traditional cloud and ruyi patterns, Tai Chi patterns, and spiral patterns. These patterns are strongly decorative and... embody the symbolic meaning of wishful auspiciousness”, but these descriptions merely stay on the visual description, without explaining their design origin. Moreover, the illustrations are all in black and white, making it difficult for readers to understand the colour of the lion dance masks, leading to potential misunderstandings.

Xie (2021) pointed out that Foshan lion dance has integrated martial arts, drama, and dance, and the integration and creativity have been realized in costume design, stage art, and musical instruments. However, the lion head mask, being the most important part of the lion dance costume, has not been thoroughly analysed. She stated, “In the earliest lion dance decorations, flame patterns were most widely used, and as the traditional Chinese lion dance culture spread, flame patterns were gradually replaced by other designs”. But this statement is inconsistent with Kong (2022), who claimed that Tang floral patterns are most frequently applied to lion head masks.

Zhou (2014) described the decorations on the lion dance masks, asserting that the decorations on Foshan Lion Heads are influenced by Cantonese and Peking Opera costumes and headwear. These decorations include the forehead mirror called “Tian Ting”,

colourful ball tassels, and whiskers and hair that reflect character traits. Though this provides a superficial understanding of the visual elements of lion dance masks, it remains limited to mere awareness, not true understanding. Furthermore, the generalized display of Foshan Lion Head decorations and the neglect of other regions' styles may lead to a biased view, resulting in informational discrepancies.

Zhan (2023) conducted a more detailed analysis of the visual elements of Suixi Lion Head masks through interviews, field investigations, image analysis, and comparative research, offering more accurate data on the subject.

Overall, there are significant research gaps in the study of lion dance masks, including unclear sources, mismatched information from interviews and field investigations, unscientific data collection methods, mismatching images, and text descriptions, and a lack of systematic analysis and organization of the material. Hence, there is a considerable research space for the visual elements of lion head masks, which this article will focus on.

2.2.3 Scholars' Exploration Directions in Lion Dance Culture

i. Cultural Context's Impact on Lion Dance Culture

Lion dance culture has evolved overseas with the movement of Chinese immigrants, influenced by local environments and cultures. Irsyadi and Ekawardhani (2023) described lion dance as a traditional art form that originated in China. Upon its introduction to Indonesia, the shapes and colors of the lion head masks have gradually evolved to develop new usage rules and cultural meanings. Unlike the Southern Chinese lion dance, which lacks female roles, the Indonesian version known as "Barongsai" attributes the horns on the

lion dance masks to signify life and regeneration, symbolizing women (Ibrahim, 2023). Despite the basic form of the lion dance remaining unchanged, its meanings vary due to regional differences, leading to perceptual variations in its interpretation.Watford (2019) posits that the representative “lion dance” of Asian culture, upon its introduction to the United States, has become an integral part of American culture and serves as a symbol of the struggles faced by Asian Americans in the U.S.. The study concentrated on the propagation and development of lion dance in America, its transformation into multicultural and pan-ethnic traditions, and its subtle political applications in the U.S. Through interviews with Asian American lion dance team leaders, the study found that Foshan and Heshan lion performances originated as a way to drive away evil spirits and bring good luck. The design of the lion heads is based on traditional styles but also adapted according to the dancers’ needs. Teams in Seattle and California prefer Foshan lions because of their wide-open mouths, allowing performers to see clearly, while Heshan lions are less popular due to restricted vision and less fierce appearance. Additionally, over the years, the lion dance movement in the U.S. has slowly moved towards pan-ethnic identity due to an open attitude towards lion dance development by many masters (Watford, 2019).

Many scholars argue that globalization has greatly developed and universalized cultures with distinctive folklore characteristics, such as lion dance. Jo (2004) posits that globalization is the interplay and entanglement between global and local influences. To understand the features of local folklore, it is necessary to refer to the specific behaviours and actions and their meanings to the performers and audiences. Inda and Rosaldo (2008) also argue that the reinforcement of globalization originates from the movements, encounters, connections, and ongoing cultural interactions and exchanges in our lives. The

interplay between the global and local shapes our world. Cultural exchanges and interactions, whether global or local, contribute to and drive globalization. Globalization has also altered the dynamics of lion dance groups, not only in the United States but around the world (Yap, 2017). Today, Malaysia, as a powerhouse of lion dance, has an open attitude towards the promotion of lion dance culture. Ying and Chiat (2016) suggest that through the cultural integration and innovation in dance steps, Malaysia has successfully established a unique style of lion dance, overcoming the general perception of lion dance as solely a Chinese cultural practice. According to Master Xiao (2021), a lion head maker in Malaysia, "Lion dance has become synonymous with Chinese culture after being absorbed and dissolved into it... Lion dance has a history of thousands of years, and its traditions are so complex that they're difficult to clarify, hence it continues to evolve, with the design and decoration changing over time". Pan (2012) noted that lion dance activities first spread to Vietnam, then Thailand, where it has been continuously evolving in terms of performance movements and popularity. In Thailand, minor changes have been made to the actions, performance times, and appearance of the props in lion dance, yet these changes still clearly reflect the basic characteristics of Chinese lion dance activities.

Thus, it can be seen that the lion dance culture has gone global along with the Chinese diaspora, and it has not been restricted by its label as "traditional Chinese culture". On the contrary, it has intermingled with local cultures through its folkloristic elements, leading to diverse performance styles, more varied prop designs, and a richer cultural meaning of lion dance. The above contents can be referenced in this study for the understanding of the motivating factors for the visual symbol changes in lion dance, supplementing more background information in the data analysis stage for the "symbol"

and “collective cognition” sections.

ii. Promotion of Lion Dance Culture by New Media

Li and Chen (2006) proposed using animation interaction programs to choreograph Chinese lion dance movements, enabling a more vivid and in-depth understanding for audiences, thereby safeguarding this intangible cultural heritage. They argue that the complexity and expressiveness of lion dance movements, a traditional performing art, can be replicated using animation technology, allowing the audience to experience the charm of lion dance culture through human-computer interaction. The intervention of new media indeed provides an effective means of preserving cultural heritage like lion dance, addressing the issues of cultural transmission. Lee et al. (2010) point out that traditional cultures like lion dance face the threat of neglect in modern society. They believe that by innovatively designing interactive media for lion dance, traditional culture can be revitalized on interactive media platforms to deepen audience experience and effectively promote lion dance culture. In their research, they briefly introduced the history and dance steps of lion dance, with a focus on the design methods of interactive media to allow lion dance to interact with the audience in a “live” way. However, their research lacks investigation into the historical background, dance steps, and visual imagery of lion dance, resulting in their interactive design merely innovating in form but not effectively and accurately promoting lion dance culture.

Similar research is not uncommon. Sun (2013) believes that the digitization of folk-dance activities can achieve digital preservation and reproduction of the inheritors and their activities, which include the recording of inheritors, dances, and folk customs. The standard digitization and storage of folk dances offer effective protection for such folklore,

aligning with modern expectations of technology aiding the preservation and development of traditional cultures. However, in his research, Sun's focus is on the standardization of digital technology. This standardization only pertains to "digital technology", and a detailed solution for the standardized pre-processing of historical background and visual effects in traditional dances is still lacking.

Tang et al. (2023) proposed the integration of digital twinning technology with the three-tier cultural theory to promote the development of traditional culture in the digital age. This study, while exploring strategies and methods for sustainable design and dissemination of traditional culture, highlights the importance of understanding the connotations of traditional culture, which forms an integral part of the research. An implementation plan for the extraction and transformation of the "lion dance culture gene" is proposed in the article. The study underscores the significance of the "cultural connotations" in digital communication, with a focus on "design and dissemination". This article is particularly insightful for the researcher.

Therefore, in an era where digital technology is increasingly prevalent, scholars show great enthusiasm for new media and new technologies, using these methods to actively promote the protection and development of traditional culture. However, the researcher believes that to ensure the fidelity and effectiveness of cultural information during broad dissemination, the preliminary collection and analysis of data are crucial and foundational for research. A database built on accurate and comprehensive data can provide a strong cultural endorsement for final outputs. Therefore, the visual symbols in this research can effectively supplement the current data gap in lion dance culture, and its results will lay a solid foundation for the promotion and development of lion dance culture.

2.3 Theories Adopted in the Study of Traditional Craft Art

The lion head mask in the lion dance can be referred to as the “lion head”, “lion head mask”, or “lion dance mask” (Yu, 2015). As mentioned earlier, there are not many examples available for reference when using “lion head mask” as the keyword for searching. The lion head mask is a traditional Chinese craft, involving aspects such as the production process, craft culture, and patterns. This study focuses on elements such as craft culture and patterns, beyond the production process of the lion head. To broaden the research perspective, the researcher has expanded the range of references in theoretical research. In the study of traditional craft art, semiotics, iconology, morphological analysis theory, and other theories are often applied.

2.3.1 Iconology

Iconology is dedicated to finding a systematic research perspective that can explain the inner meanings of artistic images. Panofsky (1981) is well-regarded among scholars studying image culture for this approach.

There are many cases of research analysing traditional pattern designs through iconology. Li (2020) said that the Miao embroidery pattern has the function of expressing ideas and recording events through forms. By analysing the composition rules of flat patterns through iconology, one can understand their cultural and aesthetic connotations. The focus of her study is a narrow sense of the pattern. Lei Guiyuan, a famous modern Chinese craft artist, defined the pattern in both narrow and broad senses: “The narrow sense of the pattern refers to the beautiful composition of flat patterns; the broad sense of the pattern refers to the pre-designed structure, form, colour, and attached decorative

patterns in craft art and architectural decoration". The "visual symbols of the lion dance mask" in this study belongs to the latter. Zhu (2022) conducted an in-depth analysis of the visual representation of the Southern Lion culture using Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory. She emphasized: Images and patterns in traditional Chinese culture are highly complex and comprehensive, but in the transmission of image information, the public often gets distracted by non-key visual factors, which leads to the potential neglect or blurring of cultural connotations. Zhu Xuemeng believes that a systematic analysis with iconology can more objectively conduct traditional cultural research based on facts and effectively prevent subjective factors from influencing the analysis results. Scholar Liu (2014) provided a deep explanation of the relationship between images and symbols, including Panofsky's description of images (Table 2.1). He believes that the principles of describing and explaining artworks are divided into three levels, just like Iconology, only the names are different.

Table 2.1: Three Levels of Description and Interpretation of Artworks by Critical Inquiry

Object of Interpretation	Subjective Resources for Interpretation	Objective Correction for Interpretation
1.The Meaning of Phenomena (which will be divided into factual and representational meanings)	Necessary Existential Experience	History of Style (the possible representation of the essence of things)
2.Meaning Depending on the Content	Knowledge from Literature	History of Types (the possible imagination of the essence of things)
3.Archival Meaning (Intrinsic Meaning)	Initial Worldview Actions	General Spiritual History (the essence of possible things within a given worldview)

From the above table, we can understand the research logic of Panofsky's Iconology clearly. However, this research will focus more on the visual symbol changes of the Guangdong lion head and the cultural meanings conveyed by these changes. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide government agencies, art creators, and traditional culture researchers with a reliable research framework for the "Lion Dance Lion Head visual symbols". It is noteworthy that the lion head mask's popularity as a traditional cultural phenomenon is not only due to its rich cultural connotations but, more crucially, its profound alignment with contemporary aesthetic needs and purchasing intentions. Therefore, the "mutable" elements within the visual symbols of the lion head mask are of paramount importance.

Although Iconology provides an in-depth analysis of image meanings, in this study, we need to combine Semiotics to interpret these abstract symbols. Meanwhile, the study will also use data from interviews and the creative intentions of creators for extraction, organization, and analysis. It'so important to emphasize that the purpose of providing such a research framework is not to confine Lion Dance culture within certain boundaries, but rather to find a dynamic balance between "conservatism" and "acceptance of new ideas" in the process of cultural development. Therefore, the theory of Iconology does not apply to this study.

2.3.2 Semiotics

Chinese Folklore studies expert Li (2004) conducted a detailed interpretation of the cultural implications and symbols of traditional Chinese art pillow embroidery using Semiotics. She believes that the patterns and all activities surrounding pillow embroidery carry symbolic meanings, conveying the people's wishes for blessings and details,

constituting the symbolic system of pillow embroidery's modelling art. Similar studies are not uncommon in the field of pattern graphic research. Tong (2013) in her study of traditional Chinese Spring Festival graphic symbols, first defined the specific scope of Spring Festival graphic symbol research, and then used folklore to interpret the folk cultural connotations in visual graphics, while using Semiotics to analyse the language symbols and image symbols of the research object. She chose the combination of "signifier" and "signified" in Saussure's Semiotics to interpret traditional Chinese Spring Festival graphics, believing that this approach can help thoroughly interpret Spring Festival graphics and Spring Festival cultural symbols, and thus understand their origins and development.

Li (2014) said that the development of contemporary Semiotics largely originates from two major schools, namely the American Peirce Semiotics and the Swiss Saussure Semiotics. Peirce's Semiotics focuses on the logical function of symbols, while Saussure shifts his perspective to the linguistic function of symbols (Liu, 2017). Although these two theories have certain overlaps, their differences are also equally notable. Peirce's model emphasizes the interactive relationship between a Sign, an object and an interpretant.

"I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former" (Peirce, 1998). This sentence can interpret the three basic elements of Peirce's symbol model (Figure 2.5): the sign represents a person or object, replacing another form of expression in a specific context and environment; the object is what the symbol refers to. It could be a specific thing, or it could be an abstract concept or thought; the interpretant is a unique element in Peirce's

model, referring to the psychological reaction or understanding triggered by the symbol. It does not directly point to a person, but to the psychological image or idea that establishes the connection between the symbol and the object. The interpretant is actually the understanding and interpretation of the symbol, which is produced based on individual understanding (Moradi, 2023).

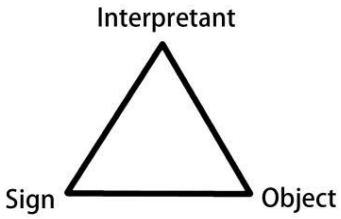


Figure 2.5: Peirce's Sign Model (Peirce, 1998)

Li (2023) provided an example of the application of Peirce's Semiotics in his research. Li delved deeply into the heritage, development, revitalization, and innovation of the intangible cultural heritage of Yuexi. He emphasized that Peirce's Semiotics is a discipline that involves constant learning and revision. During the communication process of the symbol, the reader must understand the historical context, current environment, and relevant experiences of the symbol to accurately decode its original intention. At the same time, the interpretation of the symbol by the receiver constitutes the "interpretant", that is, the outcome of the signification of the symbol. Notably, the "interpretant" possesses dynamic characteristics. Given different life experiences and cultural backgrounds, the interpretation results of the same symbol may vary. This not only reveals the multiplicity, openness, and dynamism of the symbol but also demonstrates the communal characteristics of the symbol (Wang, 2019).

A single symbol can generate multiple interpretants, and there are multiple relationships between the sign and the object. To explain the "relationship between the sign and its referred object", Peirce further subdivided symbols into three types: Icon, Index, and Symbol. These two parts (the three elements and the three types) are interconnected (Figure 2.6). An Icon is a symbol associated with the object through physical similarity or correspondence; an Index is associated with the object through physical or causal connections; a Symbol is a sign entirely based on social or cultural conventions, with no direct physical or causal connection with the object. The three elements can clearly explain the relationship between the sign and the object.

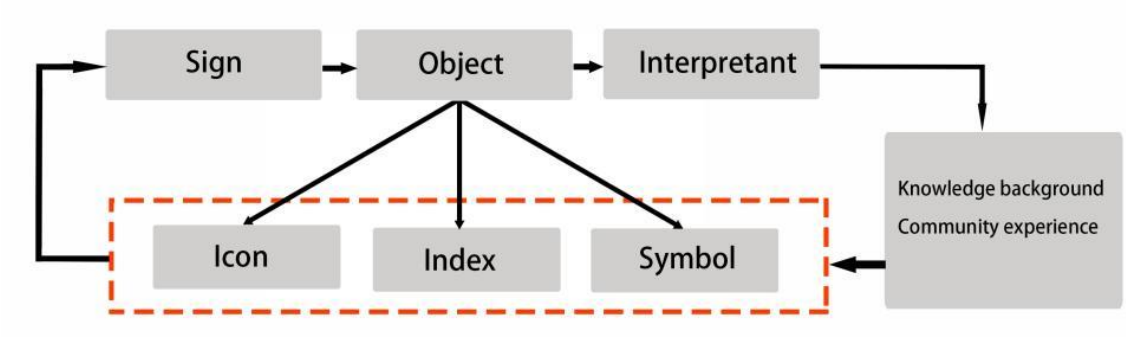


Figure 2.6: Peirce's Sign Trisection Theory Diagram (by Zhan)

In the field of Lion Dance research, there are sporadic documents that analyse the research object through semiotic theory. Guo (2022) pointed out that by adopting semiotic theories and methods, the cultural value of the research object can be explained through the analysis of the function of the symbol and the encoding and decoding aspects. Placing the cultural phenomenon of the Lion Dance in the semiotic system of "symbolic implications", its cultural connotation is explored, its rules are discovered, and a rich and complete image

of the “Tianta Lion Dance” is presented to the reader. The semiotic theory involved in this research is comprehensive. In the process of analysing symbols, she divided the symbols of the Tao Temple Tianta Lion Dance into visual symbols and auditory symbols. The visual symbols include dynamic and static modes of expression. A systematic classification of symbols can present the Lion Dance culture in a three-dimensional manner. The scope of this research is not a longitudinal study of a single project, but a horizontal comparative study of multiple regions and a longitudinal study of individual projects. This research method has provided inspiration for the researcher, but it is not entirely applicable.

In innovative application research, scholars have also explored using semiotics as a theoretical framework. Xie (2023) conducted an analysis of the Foshan Lion Head based on Morris’s semiotic theory, suggesting that Morris inherited Peirce’s trichotomy of semiotics, proposing a view composed of semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics. In his study, he analysed the symbols of shape, colour, and decoration through syntactics and semantics to extract new visual symbols that break free from original visual constraints. In the field of derivative design research using intangible cultural heritage visual elements, Qi (2020) stated that the refinement and application of symbols is the process of designers extracting, sorting, and translating visual elements. Zhou (2023) proposed using the three elements in semiotics - the O.V.S., as a theoretical support, to deconstruct the specific units in the symbol, and then use Saussure’s semiotics to regroup the units using the “syntagm” and “paradigm”, to achieve the purpose of innovative design without changing traditional culture. The method of unit recombination used in this research solved the problem of element integration in innovative pattern design, but it is not suitable for the analysis of the cultural connotation of visual symbols.

This study aims to explore the changes in the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance and the cultural meaning conveyed, which involves the deep meaning of symbols and the variability of symbols. Considering these characteristics, Peirce's semiotic theory may be more appropriate. Peirce's semiotics emphasizes the triad of symbol, object, and interpretant. In this theory, a symbol is something that represents an object to an interpretant. In this process, the symbol generates an interpretant, which is a new symbol. This theory pays attention to the dynamism of symbols and their relationship with cultural, social, and historical backgrounds, and further expands on this with the concepts of icon, index, and symbol. It can clearly analyse the changes in the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance and the cultural meaning they carry. Thus, it is feasible to analyse the visual elements of traditional art with semiotic theory. In contrast, Saussure's semiotics mainly focuses on the structure and function within the language symbol system, emphasizing the arbitrariness and difference between the symbol and the signified, tending towards a static, structured analysis. Therefore, his theory is not quite suitable for analysing the changes in the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance and the cultural meaning they carry.

In summary, given the problems and objectives of this study, Peirce's semiotic theory will provide a deep, comprehensive research perspective and theoretical support for this study.

2.4 Discussion on the Research Method of Lion Dance Visual Symbols

This section will analyse and discuss various research methods used in the study of lion dance culture, understand the advantages and disadvantages of various research methods related to this study, and select advantageous schemes for this study to use and learn from.

The study of any type of traditional culture requires a preliminary understanding of its cultural background and research theory through literature research. Tong (2013) mentioned the importance of literature analysis to her research on traditional Chinese New Year graphics. She said that to understand the traditional sources and evolution of contemporary New Year graphics, it is necessary to search and explore ancient utensils and traditional patterns through a large amount of literature, in order to understand the appearance and evolution of ancient graphics both horizontally and vertically. Du (2019) pointed out that ethnic cultural symbols have regional cultural characteristics, including the cultural heritage, thoughts, customs, etc., of various ethnic groups. For example, the art of calligraphy, which has a history of more than 3000 years, has been greatly influenced by changes in dynasties and folk customs, so research on its historical background is essential. Sorting and analysis of literature can help researchers find the development threads and research gaps in complex materials. Zhu (2019) compared the mask designs of southern and northern lion dances. In his research, he needed to analyse the cultural background of southern and northern lion dances in detail to understand the reasons for the formation of visual elements, providing an important research basis for data collection and analysis. Zhu (2022) believes that literature research can help researchers sort out existing research results and the current research situation, and understand the knowledge structure of related theories. For the research on lion dance symbols, a comprehensive understanding of its background knowledge is the primary condition for this research. Even though the study of lion dance culture is gradually moving towards digital research, literature analysis still has an important guiding significance for the study of traditional cultural communication. Tang et al. (2023) said that the lion dance symbolizes “pursuing good luck and avoiding bad luck” and “safe and smooth”, which are important metaphors in the blood cognition of

the Chinese nation, and the “cultural genes” of lion dance need to be collected and categorized in large amounts of data to be recognized. Literature analysis will provide comprehensive background materials for this research to ensure its accuracy. Therefore, it can be seen that literature research plays a key role in understanding cultural backgrounds, research theories, and the evolution process of cultural symbols, and this method should be used as the basic research method for this study.

Zeng and Cheng (2018) suggested that the archival documents of the dragon and lion dance culture, a part of Guangdong’s local culture, are incomplete and lack standardization, creating problems. These issues have negatively affected the protection and development of China’s intangible cultural heritage. Due to a lack of written documents, interviews and field studies often feature in the research of lion dance culture. Watford, R. (2019) investigated the development of lion dance culture in the United States, conducting interviews with lion dance performers in Seattle, Atlanta, and California to understand their attitudes towards the globalization of lion dance. Pan and Fan (2023) explained that interviewing inheritors is the most direct and effective method to gather primary data. In their research on the inheritance and development of the lion dance skills in Suixi, they documented the lion dance steps, props, and the making process of the lion heads through audio and video recordings. The information obtained from interviews effectively supplemented the missing written data, providing targeted primary data for their research.

Zhang (2020) stated that both fieldwork and interviews have practical significance for the collection of first-hand regional cultural information. During his field study of lion dance culture, he tracked and recorded the life, training, and performances of the lion

dance teams. He also conducted detailed data collection at various lion dance training bases and performance sites, which greatly inspired his work. Wang (2020) also used fieldwork in his research on the curriculum design of Hakka lion dance in Guangdong. He argued that field studies not only allow researchers to gather first-hand data, but watching the performances allows them to feel the subtle changes in the performers' movements, the shift in the atmosphere, and the rhythm of the instruments being played. It also provides reliable evidence for research through video recording. The data from photos and videos can supplement the interview data and provide more comprehensive and three-dimensional primary data for subsequent data analysis.

In exploring the extension of traditional culture, case studies are not uncommon. Zhou (2014) summarized the colour standards for the roles in Foshan lion dance through case study methods. Zeng (2017) proposed that summarizing the overall shape of Guangdong lion dance, analysing its image, and combining with case studies could provide references for the application of lion images in packaging. Huang (2021) believed that applying emotional design to the animated brand tourism souvenirs of lion dance culture through case studies has positive implications for innovation. Other researchers in the application design of traditional culture, such as Li (2022), argued that case studies can analyse the visual symbols of Guangdong lion heads and provide new ideas for brand image design of lion dance. Lu (2022) and Kong (2022) thought that explaining the elements and cultural implications of Guangdong lion dance and combining with case studies can provide some references for the application of product design with the theme of lion dance. Case study research focuses on empirical research, and the research results usually have a strong connection with real-world problems and are conducive to solving

specific issues. However, since case studies can only solve specific cases, their results are difficult to generalize to other projects. Also, the biases of the researcher can affect the selection and analysis of cases, potentially resulting in biased research results. Therefore, the researcher believes that case studies are not applicable to this research.

In the study of lion dance culture, the use of comparative analysis method is not common. Han and Cheng (2014) analysed the visual symbols of Foshan and Pizhou lion dance masks from a design perspective. Through comparative study of the two, they analysed that the similarities and differences in the performance techniques of the lion head masks in both places are all derived from different individual consciousness and social, environmental consciousness. Dong (2014) argued that by comparing the features of Pizhou paper-made lion head with Hebei Xushui County lion head and Foshan Lion Head, the audience can have a clearer understanding of the appearance of Pizhou lion head. Zhu (2019) made a comprehensive exploration of the inevitable connection between the manufacturing techniques and other factors of the lion dance masks in Pizhou and Jieyang through a comparison of the two, thereby analysing the reasons for the differences and exploring their cultural values. Both of these papers performed comparative analyses of two vastly different lion dance lion head masks. However, I believe that horizontal comparative analysis can make the audience understand the differences in regional culture, but in this study, vertical comparative analysis can clearly present the driving factors of visual symbol changes. Ji (2017) carried out a vertical comparative analysis of the characteristics and forms of Chinese lion remains, introduced the changes in the shape of stone lions in different periods, and showed the process of cultural environment change.

Image analysis method enables researchers to conduct intuitive analysis through the modelling, colour, and pattern information of the research objects in the data images, but image analysis easily involves a lot of subjective interpretation. Dong (2014) used the method of image analysis to conduct a tabular analysis of the visual symbols of the lion dance masks in Foshan, Pizhou, and Hebei Xushui County. Dong's image analysis is conducive for readers to retrieve its visual information, but there are five problems: First, the analysis of production materials and processes is not detailed; Second, the modelling analysis only stays at the textual description, and the details are not clear; Third, the colour sample data is not complete, the display method is not appropriate, and the analysis results are not rigorous; Fourth, the research on patterns is insufficient, and the graphics and text display do not match; Fifth, the details of the decoration have not been carefully considered, and the definition is not accurate. Zhan and Zhu (2018) pointed out that the overall characteristic analysis of the style, colour, and pattern of the research object based on literature materials and physical materials can aid the extraction and design application of visual factors of the research object. This article used the images of literature materials and self-drawn illustrators to analyse visual elements, which to some extent avoided the excessive influence of subjective consciousness on image analysis, but also had the problem of "some image materials are not sourced from first-hand materials, data sources are not comprehensive". Zhu (2019) conducted a detailed data analysis on the proportion extraction, modelling contour line extraction, feature interpretation, colour extraction, etc. of Pizhou lion dance masks through the method of image analysis, solving the problems of "subjective interpretation" and "incomplete data source" in the method of image analysis. In this article, Zhu conducted different methods of image analysis for the characteristics of visual elements. For example, the curve angle comparison method was used for the

analysis of the mask contour; the grid area statistical method was used for the analysis of the lion's nose of the mask; the HSV analysis method was used for colour extraction. The data obtained from image analysis in this article is relatively objective, and this method is very helpful for the analysis of details and has high reference value for this study.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter conducts a literature review from several aspects such as the research overview of the visual elements of the Guangdong lion dance lion head, the research theory of traditional crafts and arts, and the discussion of related research methods. For the three goals of this study, a clear literature review and analysis provide a clear research framework for this study. First, understand the research background through literature review and find research gaps; Second, confirm the academic theory that supports this study through the comparison of literature materials, making it more academically valuable and meaningful; Third, understand the research methods related to this article through literature analysis, and then establish its research method based on the research purpose of this article; Finally, the literature materials will serve as the original material for the analysis and comparison in the discussion chapter to ensure the rigor and academic nature of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

Covered in this research, demonstrating the credibility of data collection and analysis. The methods and procedures designed for this research ensure its effectiveness. In terms of coding and organizing interview data, the “grounded theory” proposed by Glaser, Barney and Strauss, Anselm. (1967) is an effective and practical approach, thus is considered as a foundational theory by many qualitative researchers. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006) provided a more explicit procedure for data collection and organization based on the grounded theory, suggesting that comparative study within the grounded theory could generate more inspirations and richer data for researchers. Precise data collection offers a valid basis for data analysis. Afterward, the researcher utilized Nvivo software for data analysis. Maher et al. (2018) noted that the lack of rigor in arts design research could affect the results of qualitative data analysis. They also recognized that while Nvivo software might not deliver absolutely accurate data analysis, it does offer objectivity and effectiveness in data management and quantitative analysis. Once the data are accurately obtained and analysed, the research moves to its core sections, involving the combined use of theoretical analysis, image analysis, and comparative analysis. Chinese scholars Han and Cheng (2014) once applied image analysis and theoretical analysis in their comparative study on the visual design of lion dance masks from North and South China. This paper will conduct an inductive and exploratory qualitative research on the visual symbols of Guangzhou Awakening Lion mask through literature review, interviews,

on-the-spot investigation, theoretical analysis, image analysis, and comparative analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This research employs qualitative research, which consists of two phases (Figure 3.1). The first phase is data collection. The first goal of this research is to identify the specific visual elements present in the Guangdong Awakening Lion mask, including its shape, colour, pattern, and decoration. The first step of the understanding is to conduct literature review to grasp the background of the research object, thereby obtaining directional information for the subsequent data collection. The second step involves interviewing artisans related to the making of Awakening Lion masks. The interviews and field investigations should overlap or occur simultaneously to ensure the comprehensiveness of data collection. The third step is to pre-analyse the data obtained from the literature review, interviews, and field investigations. The generated data will be used in the more in-depth data analysis of the second phase.

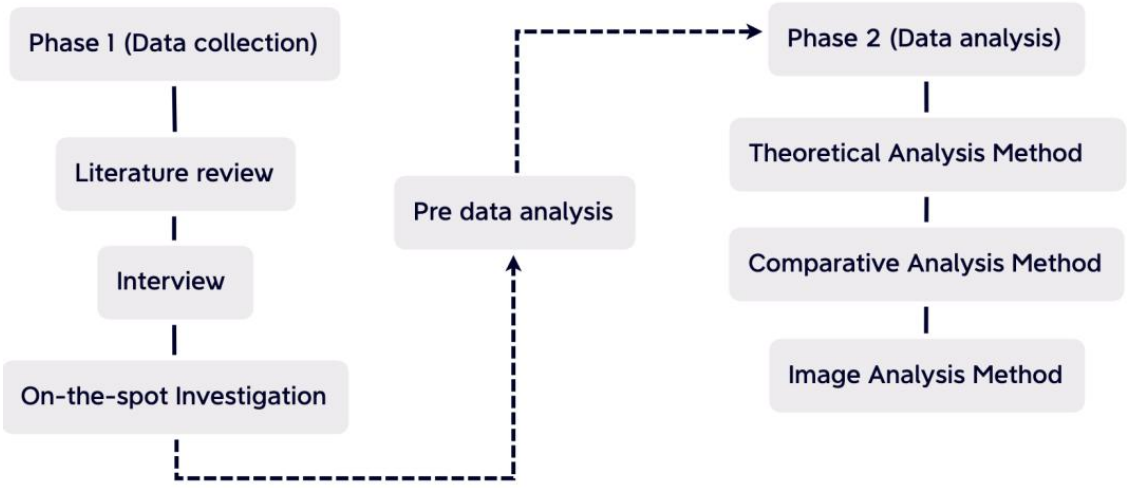


Figure 3.1: Research Design (by Zhan)

The second phase requires three methods to analyse the preliminary results from the first phase: theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, and image analysis. These methods are used in parallel to achieve the second goal of the research: to investigate the unique traditional culture conveyed by the visual elements in the Awakening Lion mask.

3.2.1 Descriptive Data Collection

The first step of data collection begins with literature analysis. Literature on relevant themes such as Guangdong Awakening Lion mask handicraft (including Foshan lion mask, Guangzhou lion mask, Heshan lion mask, and Suixi lion mask), analysis of traditional Chinese patterns, and visual semiotics is collected from channels like China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), foreign literature databases, libraries, monographs, and online reports. Through the collection and organization of literature, the researcher has an initial conceptual understanding of the history and research status of lion mask handicraft, the main visual characteristics of lion masks, and the meanings of their visual symbols, which provides a theoretical foundation for the subsequent writing.

The second step is the setup of interview content. The Guangdong Awakening Lion includes the Foshan Awakening Lion, Guangzhou Awakening Lion, and Suixi Awakening Lion. Therefore, the lion masks used in these three lion dances are the main subject of this research. The Foshan lion mask is a national intangible cultural heritage project in China, involving many practitioners and a large audience, making this part of the research the most complex. The Suixi lion mask and Guangzhou lion mask handicraft are provincial-level intangible cultural heritage projects in Guangdong Province, and the Heshan lion mask handicraft is a municipal-level intangible cultural heritage project in Jiangmen City. Therefore, interview materials from the personnel involved in these projects will be

included in this research to ensure its researcherity and effectiveness.

After determining the scope of this research, individuals related to the Guangdong Awakening Lion and the making of lion masks are contacted for interviews through information provided by official websites and museums. The identities of the interviewees are as follows: lion dance inheritors, lion dance performers, lion head mask artisans, directors of cultural centers, and museum directors. The researcher initially planned to conduct interviews with 30 practitioners in the Guangdong region. However, after making contact, only 28 agreed to participate in the interviews. The composition of the respondents is as follows: 8 from Foshan, 7 from Guangzhou, 6 from Heshan, and 7 from Suixi.

The study employs a "semi-structured interview" method for data collection. The instrument used in this process include: 1) A semi-structured interview schedule (i.e., interview guide), the specifics of which can be found in Appendix B; 2) Recording equipment to ensure that no part of the conversation is lost; 3) Transcription software, which converts audio recordings into text, forming the primary data for analysis; and 4) NVivo analysis software, which aids researchers in categorizing and analyzing the data more effectively.

All interviews are conducted in person. The duration of each interview is over 25 minutes, with the longest being 68 minutes. Before the interviews, all interviewees receive an invitation from the researcher, who informs them that they will be photographed, filmed, and recorded upon their consent. After agreeing that the data can be publicized and published, the researcher exports the content of each interview into text. Due to the geographical diversity of the interviewees and the existence of regional dialects, the

recording software cannot recognize all audio content. Therefore, the researcher needs to translate and correct the content during the export to ensure the accuracy of the interview content. In this research, some interviewees' information will be anonymized and replaced with English codes A-K.

This research employs semi-structured interviews. According to the research questions and objectives, combined with the views and research gaps provided by the literature review, the researcher designs an outline of guiding questions for the research. During the interview, expressions of research value are followed up to gain a deeper understanding of the research object. Among the set questions, four are situational and roughly understand the basic information of different regional Awakening Lion masks from the aspects of historical introduction and personal cognition. Seven questions related to the core research content can comprehensively understand the modelling, colour, decoration, and pattern of the lion head through interviews. Six questions in the development exploration part mainly aim to understand the current problems and possibilities of lion mask development through interviews. The complete interview contains 17 questions, and the design table for semi-structured interview questions of this research can be found in Appendix B.

During the interview process, it was found that among the 28 interviews conducted, data obtained from 11 of them were valid, while the other 17 frequently contained data of no referential value, such as answers like "unclear", "unknown", "possibly" and so forth. This type of interview information primarily came from answers of novice craftsmen. According to American qualitative researchers Barney and Anselm (1967), saturation can be deemed to have been reached when no new information or themes are generated from

new interviews or observations, at which point the interview process can be terminated. In view of the above situation, in this study, the 11 valid interview samples are regarded as "in-depth interview samples", and they serve as an important basis for the analysis of textual descriptive records. The table below (Table 3.1) presents the composition of the in-depth interview sample. The distribution of personnel shows that the effective interview data includes feedback from "lion dance inheritors, lion dance performers, lion head mask artisans, directors of cultural centers, and museum directors". It is evident that the data in this table is concentrated and representative.

Table 3.1: Composition List of In-depth Interview Samples

Basic information	Location	Number of people	proportion	Personnel distribution
Region	Foshan	3	27.3%	Lion dance inheritor：1 Lion dance performer：1 Director of cultural center：1
	Guangzhou	3	27.3%	Lion dance inheritor：1 Lion dance performer：1 Director of cultural center：1
	Suixi	3	27.3%	Lion head mask artisan：1 Lion dance inheritor：1 Museum director：1
	Heshan	2	18.1%	Lion dance inheritor：1 Lion dance performer：1

3.2.2 Collection of Picture and Video Data

The interview and field inspection are decided to be carried out simultaneously or

sequentially based on the progress of data collection.

The main locations for field investigation are the studios of various inheritors, intangible cultural heritage workstations, exhibitions, and museums, which include: Foshan Ancestral Temple, Wang Feihong Culture Museum, Wang Feihong Memorial Hall, Li Wanzhen Studio, Foshan De Sheng (Liang Sheng) Musical Instrument Craft Factory, Intangible Cultural Heritage Master (Lion Dance) Zhao Weibin's Studio, The Intangible Heritage Creation Exhibition, Yongqingfang, Cantonese Opera Museum, Guangzhou Quan Sheng Lion Dance Supplies Store, National-level Intangible Heritage Suixi Lion Dance Protection and Inheritance Base, Feng Gengzhang Lion Art Intangible Heritage Inheritance Base, Feng Shengqiang Studio, Heshan Museum (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: The main locations for field investigation

Region	Number of places	Location
Foshan	5	Foshan Ancestral Temple; Wang Feihong Culture Museum; Wang Feihong Memorial Hall; Li Wanzhen Studio; Foshan De Sheng (Liang Sheng) Musical Instrument Craft Factory
Guangzhou	5	Intangible Cultural Heritage Master (Lion Dance) Zhao Weibin's Studio; The Intangible Heritage Creation Exhibition; Yongqingfang; Cantonese Opera Museum; Guangzhou Quan Sheng Lion Dance Supplies Store
Suixi	1	National-level Intangible Heritage Suixi Lion Dance Protection and Inheritance Base
Heshan	3	Feng Gengzhang Lion Art Intangible Heritage Inheritance Base; Feng Shengqiang Studio; Heshan Museum

The main participants in the interviews are the respondents who provide narrative materials in response to the interview questionnaire. Field investigations can effectively supplement the deficiencies of oral materials. Pictures and videos can not only effectively

supplement textual data but also provide sufficient material resources for the pre-data analysis.

3.2.3 Pre-data Analysis

This study is a qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that well-managed qualitative data can yield meaningful insights despite its complexity. However, some researchers, like Castellan (2010) and Creswell (2012), argue that the potential for researchers' personal biases significantly impacts their data analysis.Woods, Macklin, and Lewis (2016) argue that using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) can reduce bias. The use of CAQDAS enhances confidence in conclusions, as it facilitates easier access and retrieval of data compared to manual methods, thus enabling data visualization (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016). In the pre-research analysis section, this study will use Nvivo software to analyse the collected data. The main tools used are the word cloud and tree structure diagram within the software. To enhance the rigor and scientific nature of the study, Nvivo software was used for multi-level coding of interview information to gain insights into the views of inheritors, craftsmen, and traditional culture researchers on Guangdong lion dance masks in this study. This was supplemented by firsthand pictorial data from the field, objectively recording and analysing its visual elements and cultural significance. Afterward, using the word cloud function of the software, high-frequency words were identified, which will provide directional guidance for image analysis in the next chapter.

This study uses the strategy of Grounded Theory to carry out a hierarchical coding of the descriptive materials obtained from the interviews, that is, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding are applied sequentially for data analysis. In Grounded Theory, open

coding is the first step, aimed at conducting a preliminary analysis and disintegration of the confidence collected in the interviews. The second step is axial coding, which inducts the data obtained after open coding longitudinally, further organizing and associating the information. The last step is to finalize the integration and refinement of the core content through selective coding. (Figure 3.2)

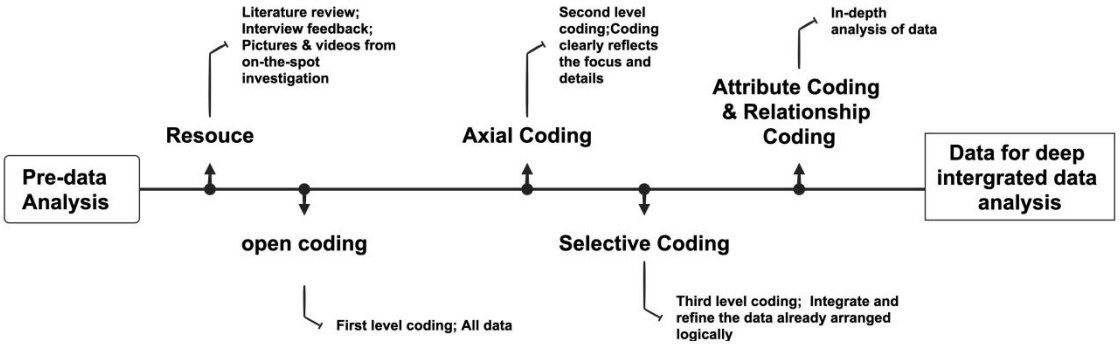


Figure 3.2: Flowchart of Coding (by Zhan)

Before coding, it is necessary to define the attributes of the codes. In the framework of this study, the independent variables include: types of visual elements (shape, colour, pattern, decoration); cultural background (specific cultural settings or traditions influencing the creation and interpretation of visual symbols); and the various techniques used in creating visual elements (technological influences). The dependent variables are: audiences' interpretations or understandings of visual elements (traditional versus modern perspectives); audiences' emotional responses to different visual elements (preferences); and the meanings or cultural significance attributed to visual elements by different audiences (individuals' cultural perceptions).

By defining the independent and dependent variables in this study, it is discerned

that axial coding encompasses independent variables, selective coding includes both independent and dependent variables, while all attribute coding and relationship coding pertain to dependent variables. The detailed categorization can be seen in the Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Coding for independent and dependent variable

Axial coding	**Selective coding**		**attribute coding & relationship coding**
Shape	Characteristics	Cheek Nose Mouth Ears Horn	Job position Generation Style characteristics Understanding of lion head characters
	Size	Dimensions Propotion	Beilef Preference
Colour	Traditional	Icon Index	Innovation
		Symbol	Customers' preference and requests
	Modern	Icon Index Symbol	Customers' attitude
Pattern	Traditional	Icon Index	Inheritors' skill
		Symbol	
	Modern	Icon Index	Customers' preference and requests
		Symbol	
Decoration	Hair Beard Pompon Rivet Sticker		Lion dance perfomer's attitude Customers' preference and requests

Note: Light green for independent variable; Pink for dependent variable

The configuration of independent and dependent variables will enable readers to clearly understand their impact on visual symbols. The setting of coding based on this approach will render the logic of coding more transparent.

i. Open Coding

Before starting open coding, all data, including interview record forms, interview recordings, and promotional brochures, should be exported and reviewed. This form of coding can help researchers sift through the original data with a more open attitude, read it word by word, and eventually get effective information. (Feng and Behar, 2019). In this study, interview data will be categorized based on the geographical location of the interviewees. Data from each region is treated as a distinct case study and will be coded within the Nvivo analytical software. The logic for open coding will adhere to the structure of the questionnaire. The primary codes are designated as “Background of lion head”, “Overview of lion head”, “Visual elements”, and “Exploration”. Sentences will then be categorized under these primary codes. For instance, statements discussing the history of the Guangdong awakening lion mask, such as “It originated in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Foshan is the birthplace of handmade lion heads, and lions from Guangzhou and Suixi are also referred to as Awakening Lion”, will be classified under the “Background of lion head”. Objective descriptions, like “Most frequently during business openings. Also, there are quite a few during the New Year”, will fall under the “Overview of lion head” category. Sentences describing colour and its significance, for example, “The lion head masks can come in various colours, but we rarely use blue because it is not deemed an auspicious colour”, will be attributed to the “Visual elements” category. Statements providing insights into the development and policies regarding lion head masks

will be tagged under the “Exploration” node. Such preliminary categorization facilitates researchers in organizing the otherwise disordered interview data in a structured manner.

ii. Axial Coding

After the preliminary classification of the materials through open coding, it is necessary to conduct axial coding, or second-level coding, on the existing data according to the focus of this study. As shown in Figure 3.3, the second-level coding clearly reflects the focus and details of the interview.

The primary focus of this study revolves around the visual symbols embedded in lion head masks, emphasizing the research and analysis of their visual elements. When compiling the textual data, descriptive data pertaining to form, colour, patterns, and decoration were abundant. Consequently, axial coding was required in this segment to ensure the precise extraction of relevant content in subsequent research. For instance, in the phrase detailing visual elements, “The eyebrows have a unique design too; they’re like sleeping silkworms”, the descriptor “eyebrows like sleeping silkworms” falls under the category of “shape”. Similarly, in the statement “The Liu Bei lion is colourful, the Guan Yu lion is black and red, and the Zhang Fei lion is black and white, following traditional conventions”, the terms “colourful”, “black and red” and “black and white” are categorized under “colour”. Such meticulous content delineation assists researchers in maintaining clarity during data decomposition and analysis.

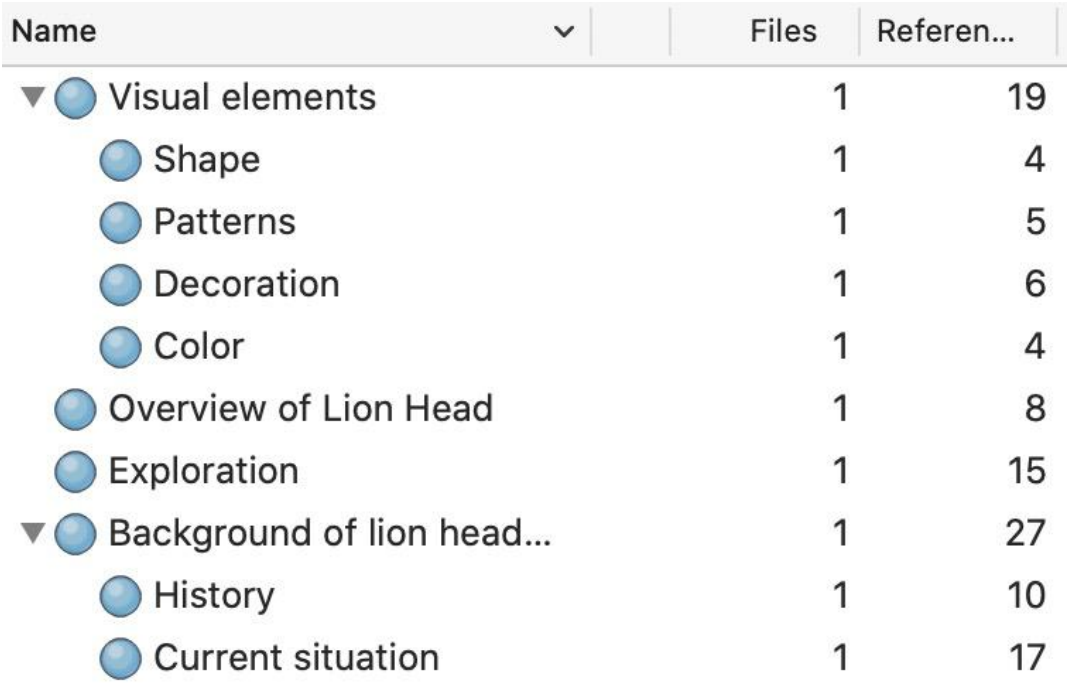


Figure 3.3: Schematic Diagram of Axial Coding for Foshan Interview (by Zhan, 2022)

The primary code “Background of lion head” necessitates further secondary coding. As there is a need to decipher the implications of the visual symbols through factor analysis, a thorough comprehension of the historical and contemporary context of the lion head masks is indispensable. Historical accounts enable a deeper understanding of the origins of the Guangdong lion head masks, while descriptions of the present scenario offer insights into their current state and challenges in Guangzhou. The content derived from these two segments will be integrated into the image analysis chapter, drawing on semiotic theories for discussion.

iii. Selective Coding

To present more accurate and effective data in subsequent analysis chapters, after

primary and secondary coding, it is still necessary to perform the final selective coding for conceptual organization. The purpose of selective coding is to integrate and refine the data already arranged logically. The research center of this article is “Visual symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion”, and thus, this coding will revolve around this core category for integration and refinement. At the same time, it is necessary to verify whether this category can establish connections with other categories when selecting analysis content. For instance, in the interview data, the researcher will find the logic of how “Traditional colour analysis” (According to the previous generation of masters, they did not use blue. Blue has always been a symbol of funerals.) and “Audience preferences” (People who come to Foshan to buy lion heads usually have a stronger preference for traditional Foshan-style lion heads.) are related to the core category of “Visual symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion”. Based on this logic, the researcher has created a node list for selective coding (Table 3.4).

The node list of selected encoding explicitly showcases the branches of research in this study. Following selective encoding, the research methodology further evolves by integrating image and video information to provide a more detailed and in-depth interpretation of tertiary encoding. This approach not only strengthens the deep connections in data analysis but also greatly broadens our comprehensive understanding of the research subject. Overall, the application of selective encoding, and the subsequent deep tertiary encoding interpretation, offer a broad and profound insight into the data, allowing this study to obtain more credible and valid information in the research of Guangdong lion dance visual symbols.

Table 3.4: Node List for Selective Coding

First level coding (Open Encoding)	Second level coding (Axial Coding)	Third level coding (Selective Coding)
Visual elements	Shape	Characteristics
		Size
	Colour	Traditional
		Modern
	Pattern	Traditional
		Modern
	Decoration	Hair, beard
		pompon
		Rivert
		Sticker

iv. Attribute Coding and Relationship Coding

After completing the three levels of encoding mentioned above, the framework of data analysis still needs to continue to expand. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis of data is needed through attribute coding and relationship coding. In the encoding table, due to the complex relationship between “attributes” and “relationships” and other contents, and some of their contents overlap with the contents of tertiary encoding, attribute coding and relationship coding will be paralleled in tertiary encoding.

In this study, attribute coding is used to record information about the identities of the respondents or specific information about lion head masks. For example, I will record nodes for the respondent’s duration of service, occupational background, or geographical

location; in the content section of the lion head mask, its specific colour, style features, size values, and other attribute information will be recorded in nodes. These attribute-recording nodes can make the data of this study more concrete and will influence people's understanding and reaction to the lion dance visual symbols.

Relationship coding, which is used in conjunction with attribute coding, is primarily used to record and interpret patterns and trends in the data. In interviews, I recorded how respondents reflect the values and beliefs of their regions through their work. Also, I found that respondents from different regions have different interpretations of lion head visual elements, and during interviews, the researcher was able to learn from respondents about the different understandings and reactions of audiences of different age groups in their regions. As shown in Figure 3.4:

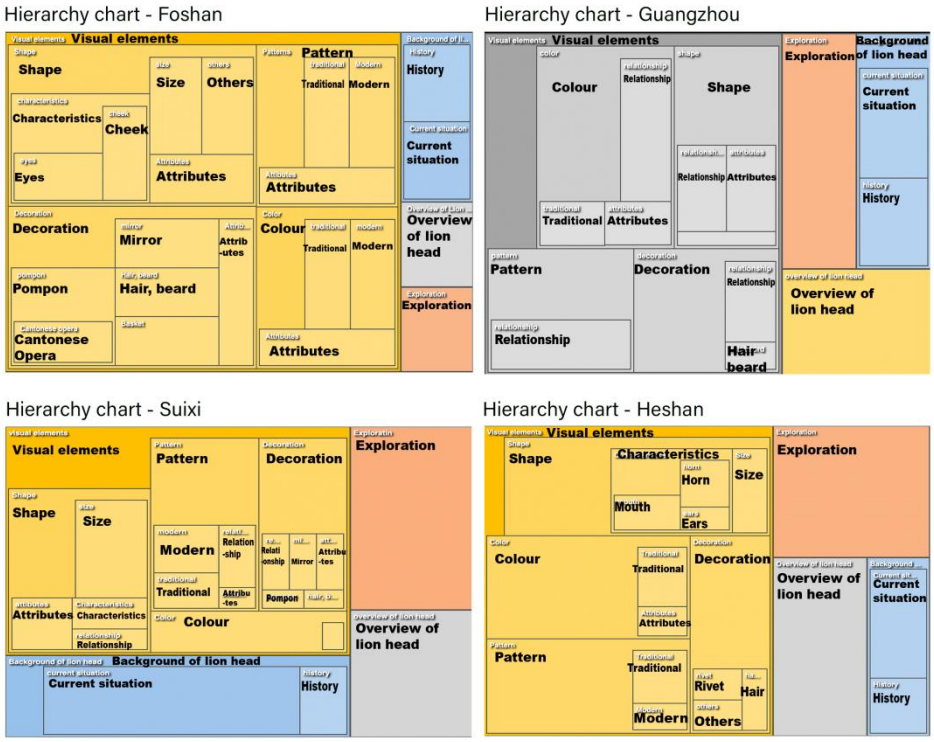


Figure 3.4: The Frequency of Words in Four Regions is a Hierarchical Chart (by Zhan)

However, the data shown in the above figure does not intuitively help researchers to organize the information. To make the subsequent research more operational, researchers will further organize the encoded data into descriptive materials.

It is worth noting that during the gradually advancing encoding process, it is normal to encode the same content multiple times. Since the interview is not a linear logic output and feedback, it has a strong subjective viewpoint, so I need to analyse the content in detail. For example, in the sentence “The special features of Suixi lion masks are solid craftsmanship, vibrant colours, and lion masks representing the Five Tiger Generals”, “special features” are related to “vibrant colours” and “Five Tiger Generals”, “vibrant colours” can be included in the tertiary encoding “Colour” node, or it can be included in attribute coding, because “vibrant colours” is a more subjective viewpoint of the respondent.

On the other hand, the sources of attribute coding and relationship coding in this study are not limited to interview recordings, but also include picture materials taken based on interview content and theoretical points sorted out in literature reviews. The expression of text and the feedback of picture information can more comprehensively present the original appearance of the research object. Based on the information mentioned above, researcher created a content list of sample interviews in the Foshan area (Figure 3.5).

Through the application of these two coding methods, a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships within the data can be achieved, thereby offering robust data support for subsequent stages.

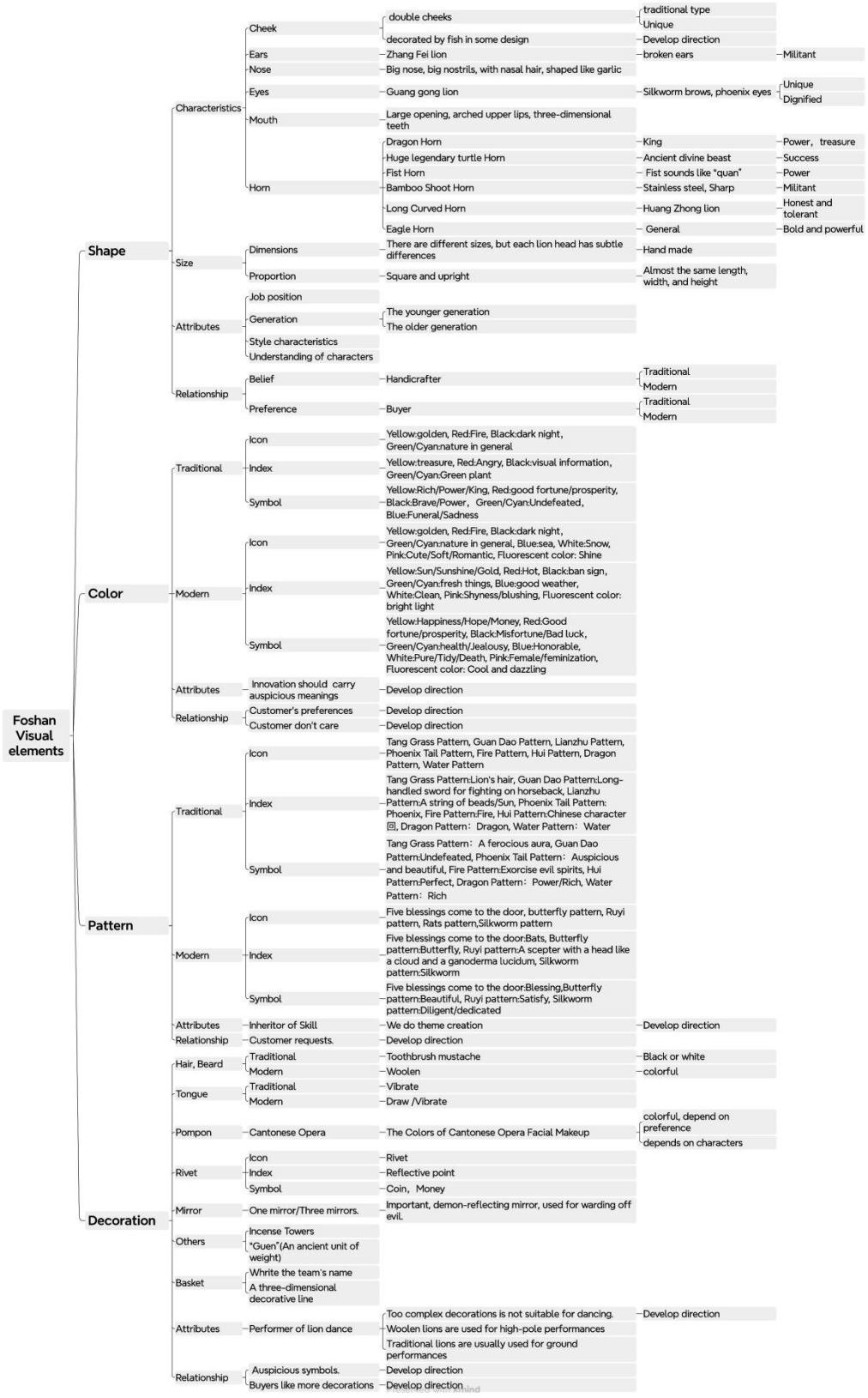


Figure 3.5: Visual Element Node Encoding Tree in Foshan Area（by Zhan）

3.2.4 Comparison of Nvivo Analysis Results

Utilizing the aforementioned coding techniques, a hierarchical structure analysis was performed on the visual elements pertaining to Foshan, Guangzhou, Suixi, and Heshan. This was followed by capturing node information in tabular form, with the compiled detailed information lists available in Appendices C, D, E, and F. This section of data serves as the foundational material for the research, and a thorough and aggregated analysis will be undertaken in the subsequent chapter.

In addition to the core content, the scope of the research also extends to an understanding of the cultural backdrop, comprehension of the central concepts of the research subject, and a contemplation on future avenues of exploration. By importing interview data into Nvivo and conducting filters for redundant words and frequency analysis, a word cloud schematic is derived. This word cloud provides readers with a swift overview of the analysed subject, allowing researchers to identify core content within the data through word frequency charts.

Revisiting the three research questions of this study, central terms include visual elements, conveyance, traditional culture, evaluation, and data support. In the interview textual data, there were 21 terms associated with “no records” (encompassing similar expressions like “did not write down”, “no text records”, “pass from mouth to mouth”. Employing this criterion for keyword statistics, words that offer directional cues to the study include: “Foshan” at 87 mentions, “Heshan” at 48, “traditional” at 52, “innovation” at 22, “demands” at 12, and “promotion” at 10. Preliminary understandings gleaned from word frequency statistics and interview data are as follows:

Firstly, interviewees expressed regret over the lack of textual documentation regarding the visual elements and craftsmanship of the lion masks. Secondly, the frequent occurrence of the term “Foshan” signifies interviewees’ acknowledgment of the Foshan lion as the origin, with immense and far-reaching influence on the culture’s perpetuation and evolution. Thirdly, the Heshan lion, having evolved from its Foshan counterpart, has carved a unique niche for itself and is cherished not only in various regions of Guangdong but also overseas, exerting a significant influence on the stylistic evolution of the lions in Guangzhou and Suixi. Fourthly, while perspectives on “tradition” varied among respondents, there was a general consensus that innovation propels the positive development of lion mask culture, with customer demands steering the industry’s directional growth. Finally, interviewees believe that effective promotion plays a pivotal role in the preservation and enhancement of this cultural heritage.

The Nvivo software provides a framework for this study to systematically analyse interview data, but in the actual application process, it still shows some significant limitations. Maher, C. et al.(2018) note that digital analysis tools like NVivo do not fully support the analysis process, but they do provide excellent data management and retrieval facilities, and assist with data analysis and reporting. NVivo allows researchers to analyze open-ended responses to survey or interview questions, as well as other textual data (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). Researchers acknowledge NVivo’s capabilities in text analysis, but its effectiveness in analyzing images is not mentioned. Thus, a primary limitation of this analysis is the software’s inability to directly and effectively process image data.The primary limitation is that the software cannot effectively process image data, and in this study, the “visual elements” part occupies a central position. The main data source of this

study comes from 725 valid photos taken in different regions, so the information provided by the photos is critical to this study. Although Nvivo can ensure the systematic and logical data sorting in qualitative research and help researchers find the intrinsic logical association in complex data, considering that the theme of this study focuses on visual symbols, relying solely on interview data as the only reference material is obviously insufficient. Selective encoding after open coding and axial coding plays an important role in supplementing the analysis results. Also, the causal inference generated after the overlap comparison of high-frequency word statistics and research question core words will become the focus of the discussion chapter. The text analysis results carried out in this chapter will provide directional guidance for the image analysis in the next chapter.

3.2.5 Deep Integrated Data Analysis

The second stage is deep integrated data analysis, which is a further analysis and study based on the preliminary data analysis. Appendices C, D, E and F derived from the previous stage provide the informational framework for this stage of analysis. During the analysis process at this stage, it is necessary to use image analysis, theoretical analysis, and comparative analysis methods for a more in-depth analysis and study of the preliminary information. The flowchart is as follows (Figure 3.6):

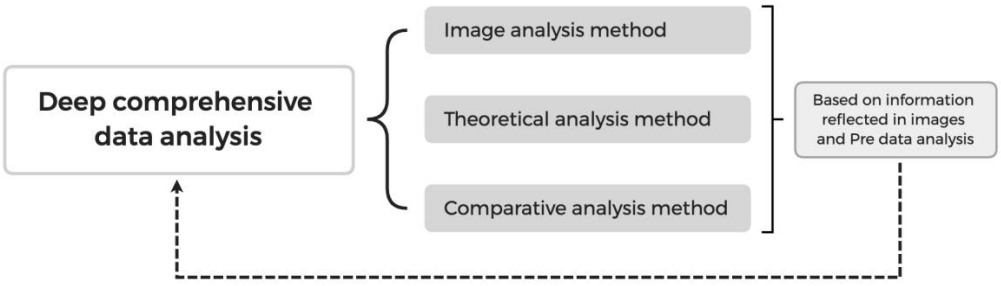


Figure 3.6: Flowchart of Deep Integrated Data Analysis (by Zhan)

Image analysis in this study serves as a method to interpret detailed information and will be carried out simultaneously with theoretical and comparative studies. In this research, images are not limited to photos obtained from field investigations but also include interpretative diagrams drawn by researchers to address problems encountered during the analysis process. Li (2021) believes that meticulous reading of images in the realm of visual art research can supplement the research content with additional information and provide solid evidence to support researchers' findings. In the process of presenting images, researchers not only show the real state of the research object to the readers, but also read various element information from the images and clarify the relationships and meanings between the elements during the drawing process.

The result of the analysis at this stage needs to explore the unique traditional culture conveyed by the visual elements in the lion head masks. Image language is also a language, complying with the general rules of linguistic symbol systems. Therefore, it is reasonable to study graphic symbols using methods of researching linguistic symbols. (Tong, 2013). Therefore, in this research, the researcher need to gain a deep understanding of the "referential meaning" and "symbolic meaning" of the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance lion heads. Lion head culture belongs to Chinese traditional folk culture, and the materials in folk culture are often scattered and lack systematic sorting. Therefore, in addition to rational data organization and analysis, theoretical support is needed for a deeper understanding, to ensure its accuracy. Li (2004) conducted a detailed analysis of the symbolic symbols of traditional Chinese pillow top embroidery, believing that the symbolic meaning of Chinese traditional folk culture expresses its deep cultural connotations. The introduction of semiotics in the research provides a systematic

theoretical framework for exploring the rich cultural meanings of folklore. Embedding theory into research can help researchers to conduct research analysis in a relatively objective manner, and under the guidance of theory, find deeper connections between symbolic symbols and culture.

Comparative analysis will appear multiple times in this stage of research. Through literature analysis and interviews, readers can generally understand the characteristics and cultural meanings of lion head masks, and comparative analysis based on the lion head characteristics of different regions allows readers to have a deep understanding of the research object. The interviews in this article are conducted regionally, therefore, the answers from each interviewee may be biased due to the influence of their geographical location and environment.

The research method for Guangzhou Lion Heads is to compare it on the same dimension with the neighboring Foshan Lion Heads, to help the researcher better understand the characteristics of Guangzhou Lion Head masks. The main comparison object of Heshan Lion Head masks is the Foshan Lion Heads, both of which are famous representatives of southern lions. The Heshan lion evolved from the Foshan lion, so they have a deep connection, yet each has its own characteristics. The design of the Suixi Lion Head mainly comes from the Foshan and Heshan lions. Line drawings were created based on the data collected from the Foshan and Heshan lions at the Suixi Lion Head Work Station and the results of on-site observations captured through photos. The improved lion heads at the Suixi Lion Head Work Station were then compared in terms of modelling, colour, pattern, and decoration.

Comparative analysis can help researchers find commonalities and differences in data during the analysis process. For example, from interviews, it was found that: the Zhang Fei lion in Foshan symbolizes “recklessness”; while the Zhang Fei lion in Guangzhou is seen as a symbol of “power and wealth”; traditional Heshan Lion Heads do not make black Zhang Fei lions because they believe black is unlucky, they only like the colourful Liu Bei lion. The contrasting interpretations of the same lion head character in different regions can be interpreted through deepening data analysis. Keywords obtained from preliminary analysis are applied in image analysis, followed by theoretical analysis, and finally juxtaposition analysis of all data to reach a conclusion. Another situation is that different inheritors in the same region produce different visual effects due to different production methods. For example, interviewee C in Foshan believes that the shape of the lion dance needs to be made according to traditional craftsmanship to ensure that its cultural significance is not lost; while interviewee B believes that modern materials have various styles and buyers have changing aesthetics, so changing the style of production can ensure that the intangible cultural heritage project of Foshan Lion Heads is more vibrant. Different opinions reflected by different producers in the same region can also be compared using the theoretical analysis method.

It is evident that the three analysis methods mentioned earlier do not appear in a fixed sequence within this study. Researchers are required to integrate data from preliminary analysis, image analysis, theoretical scrutiny, and comparative assessment. This information is then juxtaposed either horizontally or vertically in the core content sections, supplying the discussion chapters with foundational material.

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the ideas and methods of this research step by step. In this research, the literature analysis method allows the researcher to deeply understand the historical background and theoretical framework of this topic. It providing a broad knowledge base for the research; interviews can provide researchers with real and rich firsthand data, and this research method can help researchers understand the personal feelings and understandings of practitioners and audiences regarding the visual elements of Guangdong lion dance lion heads.

Field investigations and interviews are conducted simultaneously to bolster data collection. Comparative analysis facilitates the comparison of lion heads from varied styles, origins, and historical contexts, shedding light on their cultural significance. Image analysis, a staple in visual arts research, will be employed to scrutinize the central theme, “visual symbols”. Theoretical analysis underpins the entire research, guiding the integration of data with theory and interpreting the visual symbols of Guangdong lion heads using a semiotic lens, unveiling the deep ties between their visual elements and Guangdong lion dance culture. This research design provides a comprehensive examination of the visual symbols in Guangdong lion dance lion heads, setting a robust foundation for further analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDING

4.1 Overview

This chapter delineates the analytical process of visual symbols associated with the Guangdong Awakening Lion across various regions. Initially, a comprehensive introduction to the visual elements of the Awakening Lion heads from Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi is presented. This is followed by an exploration of the analytical approach to visual symbols, further refining the relationship between visual elements and symbols. Throughout this analytical journey, detailed visual symbol analyses are conducted on the lion heads from Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi, encompassing pivotal elements such as shape, colour, patterns, and decorations, while also delving into the myriad factors influencing these visual symbols. After the specific regional analyses, a holistic summary of the visual symbols from the four Guangdong areas is provided. Conclusively, a data framework for the visual symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion is constructed, elucidating its implications and significance for government agencies, traditional culture researchers, art creators, and industry practitioners.

4.2 Visual Elements of Lion Dance Masks from Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan and Suixi

In the methodological chapter, the researcher utilized the Nvivo analytical software to comprehensively dissect the visual elements of lion dance masks from the regions of Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi, with the detailed listings provided in Appendices C, D, E, and F. These exhaustive appendices lucidly lay out the visual elements of lion

dance masks from the aforementioned four Guangdong regions, achieving the objective of "identifying specific visual elements".

Table 4.1： Brief Table of Visual Elements in the Four Regions

	Foshan	**Guangzhou**	**Heshan**	**Suixi**
Shape	Double cheeks; almond-shaped nose; upturned large mouth; wind-catching ears; big eyes; 6 different shape of lion horns; proportions ratio in L, W& H; Size	Double cheeks; almond-shaped nose; upturned large mouth; wind-catching ears; big eyes; 6 different shape of lion horns; proportions ratio in L, W&H; Size	Round cheeks; garlic nose; duck beak; wind-catching ears; bulging eyes; Fist horn; proportions ratio in L, W&H; Size	Round cheeks; almond-shaped; garlic nose; duck beak; wind-catching ears; big eye; bamboo shoot shaped corners; proportions ratio in L, W&H; Size
Colour	Colour characteristics of Liu, Guan, Zhang, Zhao, Ma Chao and Huang lion. (Yellow, seven colours, red, green, white, blue；Colour ratio study)	Colour characteristics of Liu Bei Lion, Guan Gong Lion, Zhang Fei Lion, （black）	Colour characteristics of Liu Bei Lion, Guan Gong Lion, Zhang Fei Lion, （Seven colours, gold, fluorescent）	Colour characteristics of Liu, Guan, Zhang, Zhao, Ma Chao and Huang lion (Purple, rose red; Colour ratio study)
Pattern	Curled Grass Pattern; Water Patterns; Hui patterns; Beaded Patterns	Curled Grass Pattern; Water Patterns; Hui patterns; Beaded Patterns	Pore pattern; Cat whisker pattern; Curled Grass Pattern; Feather Pattern; Bat Pattern; Lotus Stem Pattern; Tiger Pattern; Fish Pattern; character pattern	Curled Grass Pattern; Water Patterns; Hui patterns; Beaded Patterns; Pore lines; Tiger Pattern; Star pattern; landscape pattern, Carp pattern
Decoration	Pompons; lion mirror; horsehair mane; rivets; flower basket	Pompons; lion mirror; horsehair mane; rivets; flower basket	Pompons; lion mirror; horsehair mane; rivets; flower basket	Pompons; lion mirror; horsehair mane; rivets; flower basket

As seen in the appendices, the Foshan lion dance mask presents the most abundant and intricate visual elements. The Guangzhou lion mask possesses numerous visual elements bearing similarities to the former. Heshan's lion mask has undergone significant adaptations based on the Foshan lion mask, leading to the creation of distinct visual elements. The Suixi lion mask, on the other hand, preserves characteristics of both the Foshan and Suixi lion masks while introducing modifications. To streamline subsequent analysis, the researcher has consolidated the visual elements into a concise table (Table 4.1).

The visual elements appearing in the table derive from a synthesis of literature reviews, interviews, and field observations. At this juncture, the researcher refers to these insights as "visual elements" rather than "visual symbols". This choice of terminology arises because "visual elements" reflect the observable aspects of the subject, devoid of the audience's interpretation, attitudes, or deeper cultural connotations. In this chapter, the researcher intends to delve deeper into these visual elements, aiming to fulfil the research objective of "understanding the cultural implications conveyed by the visual symbols associated with the Awakening Lion masks".

4.3 Visual Symbols of Lion Dance Masks from Four Regions in Guangdong

4.3.1 Analytical Approach to Visual Symbols

In the field of art and design research, visual elements encompass but are not limited to shape, colour, texture, and space. These elements are incorporated into works related to visual arts, meticulously arranged, designed, and adjusted by artists or designers to express, highlight, and present the unique attributes of the works. These visual elements

serve as carriers of information, used to construct and communicate specific messages and intentions. The visual elements discussed in this chapter have been summarized as shape, colour, pattern, and decoration, along with their encompassed contents. Detailed introductions to specific visual elements are provided to help readers clearly understand their representations.

Visual elements and visual symbols are two related yet distinct concepts. Visual elements are the basic units composing visual works, while the concept of visual symbols is considerably extensive, involving not only the constructs of visual elements but also signs or meanings with specific implications. Charles Sanders Peirce (1903) proposed the categorization of symbols into icon, index, and symbol. His analytical approach to semiotics resonates strongly with the research objective of this article "To investigate the unique traditional culture conveyed by the visual elements in Awakening Lion masks".

An icon, as pointed out by Peirce, isn't confined to two-dimensional images or text. It can be any form, as long as it shares certain properties or similarities with the object it represents. Therefore, although the lion's head in the lion dance is not a simple iconic symbol, it can still be considered as a subject of semiotic research. For instance, the shape or appearance of an icon reflects or simulates the characteristics of the object it refers to. In the lion's head mask in this study, the design of the eyes, nose, and mouth simulates the facial features of a lion to a certain extent, triggering the audience's association with the lion. These visual elements can be considered icons. However, not all visual elements can be regarded as icons, as other factors should also be considered. For example, cultural background, the intentions of the inheritors, and the audience's interpretation may change the symbolic meaning of these elements. Although they might be regarded as icons in

terms of their form, other factors might also need to be considered in a specific semiotic interpretation. In the section where the researcher organizes the interview information, attributes and relationships have been sorted out, which plays a key role in the judgment of the lion head mask icon.

An index is defined by its causal or existential relationship with the object it represents. That is, an index “points to” its represented object through some physical or actual association (Charles, 1903). In this study, the dragon-shaped horns on the lion head mask can be viewed as indices rather than icons. The inheritors claim that the dragon horns on the Foshan Lion Head mask symbolize power and researcherity. They believe that the visual element of the dragon horn is an indicator of power and researcherity. In this case, the dragon horn can be considered an index.

The core of this study lies in the symbol, which is a type of symbol completely dependent on social and cultural conventions and rules. Symbols bear no direct or natural relation to the objects they represent. For example, in traditional Chinese culture, yellow is seen as a symbol of imperial power or representative of harvest and wealth. The use of yellow on the Liu Bei lion in the Foshan Lion Head mask does not visually associate the audience with imperial power, nor is there an indicative relationship. However, in the cultural context of China, yellow represents “imperial power“, sacredness, and strength.

Symbols, rather than being rigid or fixed entities, are fluid carriers of semantic content. The comprehension of readers, coupled with the pervasive influence of their cultural backgrounds and various other determinants, can give rise to profound and, at times, divergent interpretations. A nuanced analysis of visual symbols plays a pivotal role

in facilitating readers' discernment of the intricate cultural significances imparted by specific visual elements. Such evaluations further enable an assessment of the fidelity with which these symbols articulate the nuances of China's distinct traditional regional cultures.

Nearly a hundred words related to visual elements were derived from the interview materials. The purpose of organizing the keywords of visual elements is to provide precise material for the analysis of visual symbols. According to the content provided in Appendices C-F, the visual elements of the lion dance masks from the four regions are introduced separately. Combining interview data, picture data, and analysis of each visual element, the icons (representations), index (connections), and symbols (concepts) of the lion dance mask's visual elements are clarified. Differences in cultural backgrounds or inheritors' perceptions of the lion head across different regions may affect the categorization of visual element symbols. Therefore, when analysing visual symbols, in addition to using theoretical research methods for a deeper understanding of elements, it is also necessary to combine comparative analysis methods to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of Awakening Lion dance culture. (Figure 4.1)

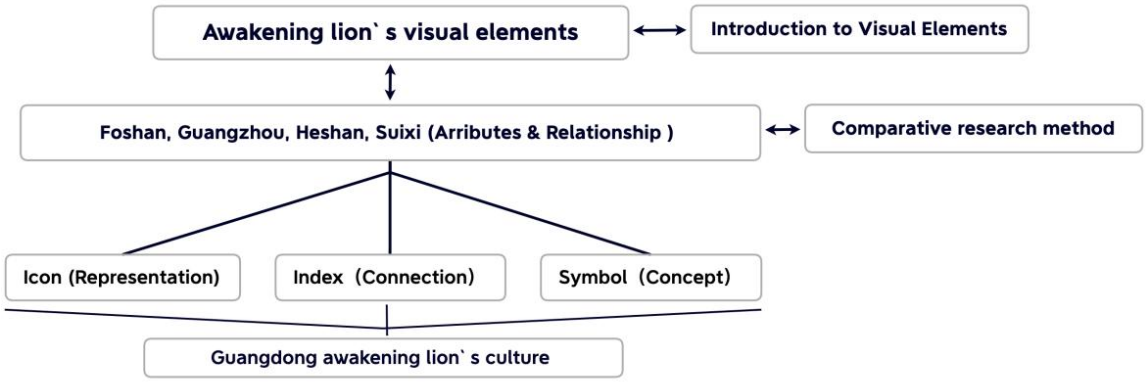


Figure 4.1: Framework of Visual Symbol Analysis for Awakening Lion Masks (by Zhan)

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the theory of semiotics can assist researchers in progressively interpreting the cultural underpinnings through the visual elements of Guangdong Awakening Lion Head Masks. There exists a developmental relationship among the icons, indexes, and symbols of the images (Xu, 2008). If this approach is applied to analyze the visual elements of he lion head, the investigation should begin with the study of its iconic properties symbol (Legi), followed by understanding the referential meanings of the elements, which can also be interpreted as individual symbols (Sine) derived from personal experiences. Finally, the underlying cognitive patterns are explored as conventional symbols (Quali). The interconnections among these symbols are also based on Peirce's "semiotic triad" logical model (Figure2.5, Figure2.6). Table 4.2 displays the relationships among the symbols in this study. Additionally, readers can learn from the table below how semiotic theory has been applied to the interpretation of symbols in this research.

Table 4.2: Symbol Relationships

The object	**Icon**	**Index**	**Symbol**
Corresponding Symbols	Iconic Symbols (Legi)	Individual Symbols (Sine)	Conventional Symbols (Quali)
Symbolic Relationship Characteristics	Perception	Experience	Cognitive Forms
Corresponding Interpretations	Visual Elements of the Lion Dance (Visible Outcomes)	Selection of Lion Dance Elements (Personal Cognition)	Visual Symbols of the Lion Dance (Public Consensus)
Function	Understanding the Characteristics of the Lion Dance's Visual Elements	Comprehending the Formation of Lion Dance Visual Symbols	Unearthing the Culture of the Lion Dance

4.3.2 Guangdong Lion Head Production Process and Its Visual Presentation

i. The Process of Making Guangdong Awakening Lion Head

"Tying, pasting, writing, and embellishing" (Figure 4.2) are the four main steps in the handcrafting of the lion head (Yu, 2015). The term "writing" can also be understood as drawing or painting. According to interview data, the process of crafting the lion head in every region of Guangdong is almost identical, but there might be some variations in the materials used. Foshan Lion Heads serve as the reference for all Awakening Lion masks, and their manufacturing process holds researcheritative reference value.

Traditional Foshan Lion Head crafting primarily uses materials like light and flexible bamboo strips, tough paper, and horse's mane hair. Although the process is simply summarized as "Tying, pasting, writing, and embellishing", each step is quite meticulous. Before bundling the bamboo strips, craftsmen choose the most resilient local bamboo for raw material, such as Mao bamboo in Foshan and Chenghao bamboo in Heshan. The chosen bamboo is dried and its green parts removed, with the drying time precisely controlled to balance the bamboo's hardness and resilience. After splitting and trimming, the thinnest bamboo strips are less than 1mm thick, usually used for crafting the facial features of the lion head. As the performer's head presses against the inner wall of the lion head, the rear part needs to be thicker. According to field research in Suixi, the choice of bamboo strips is now quite standardized, with specific workshops providing them cut to the required sizes. Due to innovations in materials, the traditional bamboo frame has been improved to an aluminium one. According to inheritor Li Zujie, the aluminium frame is

lightweight and durable, extending the life of each lion head. In Heshan, traditional methods are still used to process the bamboo strips.



Figure 4.2: Foshan Lion Head Crafting Process (The Intangible Cultural Heritage Creation Exhibition Site, by Zhan, 2022)

Next, craftsmen use bamboo strips and tough paper to create an arching dome in a cross shape, setting the size, proportions, and basic outline of the lion head to facilitate subsequent crafting. The entire framework consists of an aluminium base and bamboo strips, with nearly 500 fixing points for the basic structure and around 1000 for a complete lion head, depending on its size and complexity. Traditional yarn and paste are used for fixing, and the method continues to be used for its ease and effectiveness. Afterward, the lion's horns are shaped with bamboo strips, followed by the eyes, nose, mouth, and jaw, and ears. The overall structure is then completed. Pastes are applied to stick pieces of cloth onto the framework, beginning with the nose and followed by the forehead, horns, top of the head, and other parts. If one craftsman completes the entire process, the sequence may

vary according to individual habits. In larger workshops, each worker is responsible for one part, and the process must be standardized to ensure quality and quantity.

Pasting can also be understood as sticking. During this stage, the cloth must be tightly stretched to make the lion head look vibrant and full. The ears, chin, and eyelids are made separately as movable parts, making the lion appear more agile. The researcher discovered that some workshops apply extra layers of cloth for durability or waterproofing, and an additional layer of paper for easier colouring. Once all the cloth or paper is applied and dried, the shape of the lion head becomes apparent, ready for the next step.

The next step is painting, where a coat of clear lacquer is first applied to enhance the saturation of the colours. With continuous updates in modern materials, acrylic paints and metallic pieces are now used for colouring, followed by clear lacquer to make the colours brilliant and shiny. The subsequent processes of sewing and decorating are seen as one, as attaching the mane and rabbit fur to the Awakening Lion mask is also part of the decoration. The mane or rabbit fur is glued and sewn to the horns, ears, forehead, eyes, cheeks, nose, and mouth, making the lion head appear lifelike.

The final step is embellishing. Traditional Foshan Lion Head decorations include mirrors, rivets, whiskers, hair, tassels, beads, etc., with size and colour matched to the lion head. Heshan Lion Heads have significant differences in decoration types or quantities compared to Foshan Lion Heads, and these details and differences will be analysed in the following sections.

ii. The Relationship between the Lion Head-making Process, Visual Presentation and Visual Symbol

As stated above, the craftsmanship in the making process directly influences the visual impact of the lion head. Artisans meticulously select and trim bamboo strips, and mould them according to the different parts of the lion head; these crafting details have a direct impact on the final appearance of the lion head. The more exquisite the artisan's skills are, the more vivid and lifelike the visual effect presented by the finished lion head. In the process of crafting the lion head, the artisan gives the lion mask its full shape and beautiful patterns through the "pasting" and "painting" stages. The patterns drawn on the lion head include many traditional designs. The visual symbols represented by these patterns allow the audience to intuitively experience the cultural connotations and charm of the lion head. The decorations on the lion head mask make it look lively and agile. The forehead mirror and pompons on the Awakening Lion head are derived from Cantonese opera (Zhou, 2014), this decoration highlights the regional characteristics of the South and the local aesthetic style.

The procedure of creating the lion head, combined with its visual representation and the expression of visual symbols, interrelate in a complementary manner. Together, they construct a multi-dimensional visual experience and convey the cultural significance of the lion head tradition.

4.3.3 Visual Symbol Analysis of Foshan Lion Head

4.3.3.1 Overview and Analysis Framework of Visual Symbols in Foshan Lion Head

The Foshan Lion Head draws on the shape characteristics of Guangdong stone carved lions (Zhou, 2014). From the picture of the stone lion (Figure 4.3), it can be found that its shape differs significantly from real lions, but it is full of momentum and has an interesting style. The erect ears, prominent forehead, fierce eyes, large nose, and upturned

mouth all share visual characteristics with the Foshan Lion Head. The colour and decorations of the Foshan Lion Head are closely related to the facial colours, costumes, and headdresses of classic characters in Cantonese opera. It can be seen that all the visual elements of the Foshan Lion Head are influenced by Lingnan culture, thus forming a classic representation of southern lion head art.



Figure 4.3: Foshan Stone Carved Lion (Foshan Ancestral Temple, by Zhan, 2022)

Given the problem-oriented approach of this study, combined with field research and literature research data, it is essential to present and individually analyse each visual element of the Foshan Lion Head. The information collected from interviews and field investigations is processed using encoding and word frequency analysis to extract key content, but textual descriptions alone are not sufficient to give readers a clear understanding of the lion head's appearance and cultural connotations. Using image analysis and theoretical analysis to supplement this information, presenting and interpreting it with a combination of images and text, can make the research content more comprehensive and clearer.

The following figure (Figure 4.4) presents the key points for analysing the visual symbols of the Foshan Lion Head. According to the content shown in Appendix A, the analysis of the elements of the Foshan Lion Head is divided into “shape”, “colour”, “pattern” and “decoration”. By displaying and analysing their sub-items, it helps readers understand detailed visual information from the images and then supplement the reasons for the existence and evolution of lion dance culture through the information reflected in “attribute” and “relationship”. Both have explicit and implicit effects on the content of the four visual elements. Theoretical analysis will be interspersed among them to give readers a comprehensive understanding of the Foshan Lion Head.

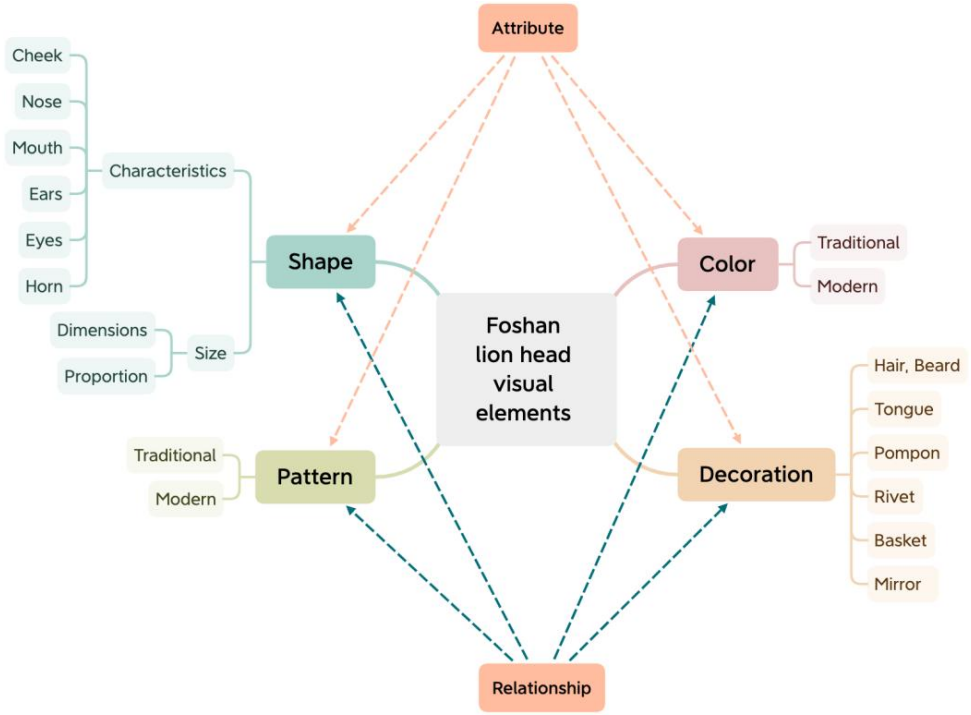


Figure 4.4: Foshan Lion Head Visual Symbol Analysis Framework Diagram (by Zhan)

As shown above, the sub-items of “shape” are “characteristics” and “size”. The visual elements that make the characteristics of the Foshan Lion Head distinctive are the cheek, nose, mouth, ears, eyes, and horn. Some records can be found in the literature about the description of the facial features and horns of the Foshan Lion Head. For instance, Han and Cheng (2014) in their study titled “Comparative Visual Design Research of Lion Dance Masks from the North and South — Focusing on Foshan and Pizhou Lion Dance Masks” included a description of the Foshan lion mask’s design: “A red-faced cultural lion with a high forehead, large mouth, white eyebrows, white beard, and an imposing appearance, featuring vibrant colours”. While these descriptions are accurate, they are abstract. Another example, there is no specific analysis or explanation about how high the forehead is or how large the mouth is. Similarly, Zhou (2014) described the mouth and tongue of the Foshan Lion Head as “a large mouth with a smile, with visible teeth and a quivering tongue”. Such descriptions, while accurate, remain somewhat ambiguous. Therefore, systematic explanations of each visual element through detailed image and data analysis are both essential and necessary.

4.3.3.2 Foshan Lion Head’s Visual Elements Details and Symbols

i. Shape

a) Size and Proportions

The standard sizes of Foshan Lion Heads are classified into five categories: special-grade, first-grade, export, second-grade (domestic), and third-grade lions. Another sizing method is based on the width of the lion’s mouth, with sizes including 41.7 cm, 40 cm, 36.7 cm, and 33 cm; the sizes of “young lions” designed for children include 30 cm, 26.7 cm, 23.3 cm, 20 cm, and 16.7 cm (Lin, 1993).

The production standards of the Foshan Lion Head provide data regarding the width of the lion's mouth for this study, but information on the proportions of length, width, and height are still missing. According to field research, the manufacturing sizes of each Lion Head varies depending on the factory or craftsman, therefore, the proportions of length, width, and height can better illustrate the visual characteristics of the lion mask. Zeng (2011) described the contour of the Lion Head as "balanced and full". Based on this description, the researcher conducted a proportional analysis of the Lion Head samples collected during the field investigation in Foshan. The researcher selects three representative samples for fixed-position filming. During the filming process, the camera equipment and the samples must maintain a consistent horizontal height. After filming from one angle is complete, the orientation of the samples should be adjusted for shooting from a second angle. (Figure 4.5)

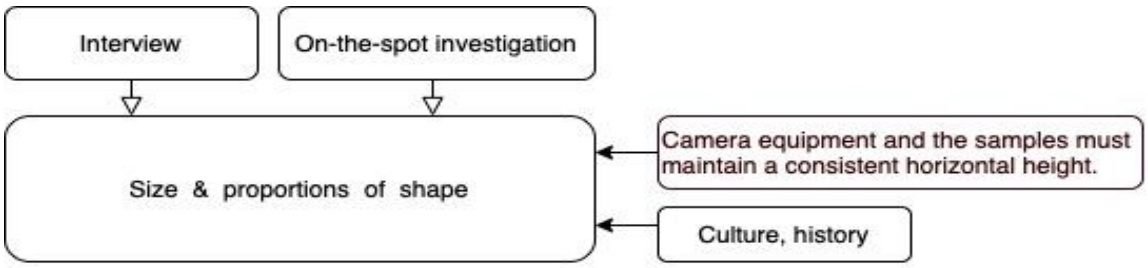


Figure 4.5： Analysis Digram of Size and Proportion (by Zhan)

Figures 4.6 and 4.7, were taken from the De Sheng Musical Instrument Factory, the Huang Feihong Cultural Museum, and the intangible cultural heritage exhibition site in Foshan respectively, with each depicting a Lion Head enclosed in a red square frame with a 1:1 aspect ratio. This shows that the Lion Head's contours follow a roughly 1:1:1 ratio,

giving the Lion Head a visually cuboid form that matches the descriptions found in literature.



Figure 4.6: Foshan Lion Head Proportion Tri-View (Foshan De Sheng Musical Instrument Factory/Huang Feihong Cultural Museum, by Zhan, 2022)



Figure 4.7: Foshan Lion Head Front and Side Proportion Diagram (The Intangible Cultural Heritage Creation Exhibition Site, by Zhan, 2022)

The square and proportionate design exudes an aura of dominance and expansion in visual representation. Zhu (2009) noted that during the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty, Foshan's unique economic and military status, combined with the local popular martial spirit, drew significant attention from anti-Qing patriots. Subsequently, the "picking the greens" activity in the lion dance performance symbolized resistance against the Qing. Within the lion dance performance, the hardships of the Han people's resistance against the Qing are depicted, encompassing a range of emotions from joy to anger, and from surprise to intensity. Thus, in the design of the lion's head, there is an absence of excessively smooth lines; instead, square proportions and robust lines are employed to portray its dominant characteristics.

b) Lion's Cheeks

The "double cheeks" is a significant characteristic of the Foshan Lion Head. Analyzing the element through visual comparison allows readers to better comprehend its morphological origins and symbolic significance. (Figure 4.8)

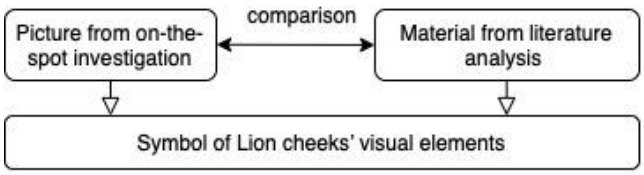


Figure 4.8: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Lion Cheeks (by Zhan)

In Figure 4.9, part A marked with a red frame shows the white embryo diagram of the Foshan Lion Head's double cheeks, where readers can clearly see the structure of the cheeks. The double-layered cheek structure encloses a round-headed hammer (locally

referred to by craftsmen as “Guen”, which will be further elaborated in the section on decoration) giving the lion a smiling appearance when viewed from the side. The blue circled area in figure B shows spikes located on the outer side of the cheeks. This structure resembles the adornments found on helmets worn by Ming Dynasty generals, as shown in figure 4.10. The inclusion of “wings” in the cheek design gives the lion head the majestic air of a warrior. In the term “lion dance”, the pronunciation of “dance” is the same as “martial” in Chinese, both being “wu”. Xia, (2022) posits that “dance” and “martial” had the same origin in ancient times. In Foshan, lion dance performers are required to learn martial arts before learning lion dance, making the performance not only entertaining but also a promotion of Chinese martial arts culture. The white box in figure C shows the position of the double cheeks on the lion head, highlighting how the complex and colourful cheeks in the lion dance mask are a crucial part for craftspeople to show their unique creativity.

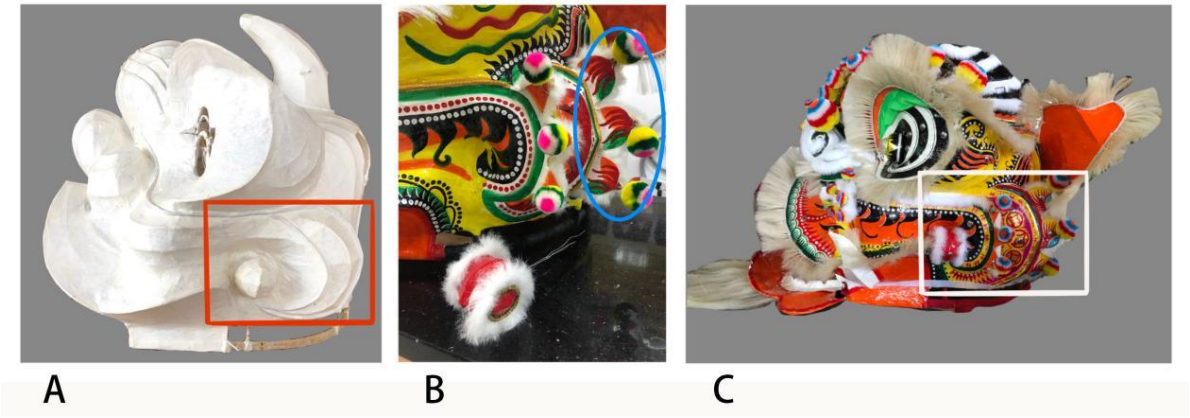


Figure 4.9: Display of Foshan Lion Head’s Double Cheeks (Foshan De Sheng, by Zhan, 2022)

The term “martial” gives the lion head its “spirit”. This interpretation aligns with Peirce’s triadic concept of “symbol”. He defined a “symbol” as a mark that acquires meaning according to convention or habit. The index of “martial” is the specific activity of martial arts. In the lion dance, the term “wu” (dance) has a close relationship with the dance in the lion dance, which is the conventionally accepted understanding of “lion dance” by the Foshan public. Almost every visual element of the lion head mask is deeply connected with the “symbol”. The cultural background and connotation contained in its symbols profoundly reflect the Chinese culture embodied by the lion head.

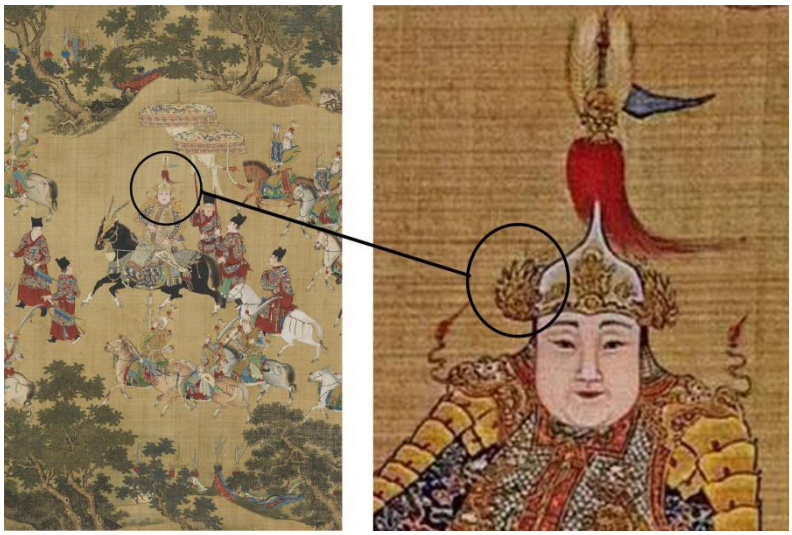


Figure 4.10： Ming Dynasty “Emerging for Duty” Anonymous (Baidu scholar, 2020)

c) Lion’s Nose

The lion’s nose is located in the centre of the frontal view of the lion head and resembles the shape of a garlic bulb, hence it is also known as the “garlic bulb nose” by craftsmen. Figure 4.11 A marked with the red box shows the appearance of the garlic bulb nose on the base model of the lion head mask, B shows its side profile, and C shows how it

appears after colouring. The display of the base model allows audiences to better appreciate the distinctive features of the lion's nose. After decoration, the unique shape of the lion's nose is often overlooked, hence the rounded and large lion's nose must occupy a significant position in the lion head.

Although Foshan Lion Heads are known for their abstract resemblance, the craftsmen show unique ingenuity in sculpting some details. The green circle in the figure above marks the nostril hairs. This design typically only appears in the "Zhang Fei" character, reflecting his angry and rugged temperament.

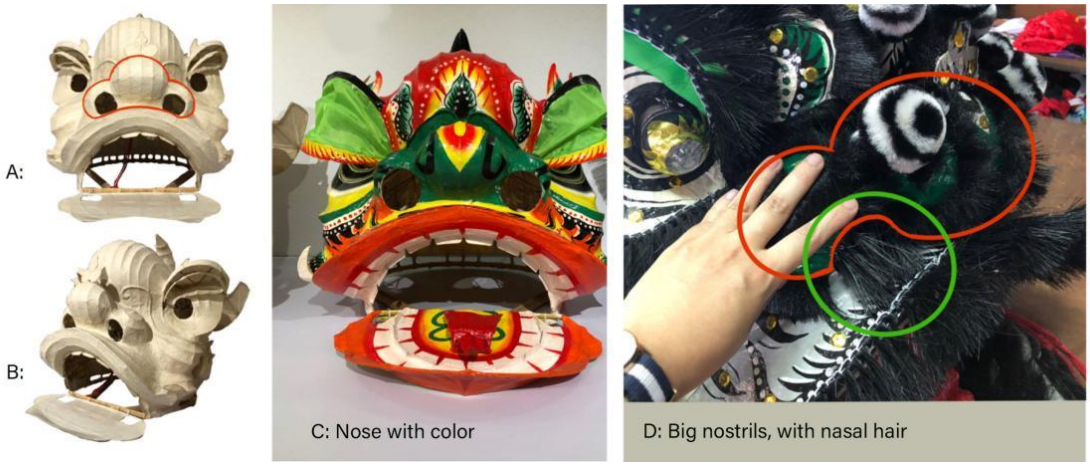


Figure 4.11： Demonstration of Foshan Lion Head Nose (The Intangible Cultural Heritage Creation Exhibition Site/Foshan De Sheng, by Zhan, 2022)

d) Lion's Mouth

Figure 4.12 illustrates the logic behind analyzing the visual symbols of the lion's mouth. This method is also applicable for analyzing the elements and symbols of the lion's ears and eyes.

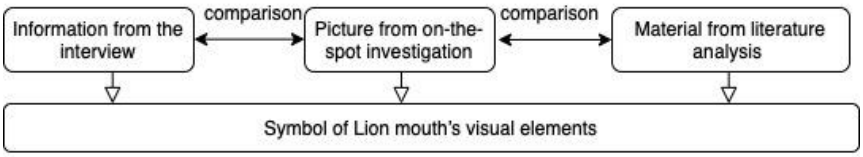


Figure 4.12: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Lion's Mouth (by Zhan)

During a lion dance performance, "picking the greens" is the climax of the whole performance. When the lion's mouth devours the lettuce, it draws thunderous applause from the audience. Zeng (2011) said that "picking the greens" was a secret code in the Qing Dynasty. A group of aspiring individuals harboured the grand plan of "overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming". In the politically sensitive climate of the time, lion dance performances subtly hinted at resistance against the Qing Dynasty through the act of "picking the greens". This is because in Chinese, the phrase "picking the greens" shares phonetic similarities with "anti-Qing", making it a representation of defiance against the Qing government. Over time, the significance of "picking the greens" has shifted. In Cantonese, the term for lettuce, which is the "green" being picked, is phonetically similar to "prosperity". Thus, the act of consuming lettuce in the dance became a symbol of prosperity and good fortune.



Figure 4.13: Demonstration of Foshan Lion Head Mouth (by Zhan ,2023)

Figure 4.13 shows the structure of the Guangdong Awakening Lion head. The large mouth that is upturned into a blunt angle is a signature design of the Foshan Lion Head. The inside of the upper lip is made with clearly defined lion teeth. Real lions do not have flat teeth but sharp teeth. However, the design of sharp teeth does not align with the symbol of the mascot, so they can only make flat teeth. But some craftsmen will add a small sharp tooth or a curved long sharp tooth on both sides of the mouth to display the lion head's vigour. The design of the lion's mouth also has practical significance in lion dance performances. Lion dancers can interact with the audience through the lion's mouth to liven up the atmosphere.

e) Lion's Ears

The two ears of the Foshan Lion Head are installed on either side of the lion's head, presenting a firm and spirited appearance. The text records about lion ears are generally summarized as "wind-catching ears" and similar expressions. However, in interviews, traditional craftsmen have mentioned that the ears of the Zhang Fei lion head, a character from Foshan's lion head tradition, are occasionally made into "broken ears". It is said that Zhang Fei's character in "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" is wild and combative, so some masters would artistically craft based on their understanding of the character; the missing piece in Zhang Fei lion's ear is a wound left from fighting. This interpretation is not documented in the literature, and I did not see any samples on the scene of the interview. Still, seven out of eleven valid interview records mention this detail. Figure 4.14A shows the picture of Zhang Fei's lion ears, but no "damaged ear" design is seen. Interviewee C stated that such designs only appear on custom-made lion heads and are not frequently made. As lion dances are considered auspicious and festive in the public's mind,

designs implying “fighting” or “provocation” do not often appear in regular lion dance performances. The bravery implied by the “broken ear” is not what the general public expects, that is a personalized design.

Figure 4.14C shows the design details on the back of Liu Bei’s lion ear. This detail echoes the small “wing” in the cheek. During the lion dance performance, the audience can find interesting aspects of the lion head design from various angles.



Figure 4.14: Display of Foshan Lion Head Ears (Foshan De Sheng, by Zhan, 2022)

f) Lion’s Eyes

The eyes of the Foshan Lion Head are as large as bronze bells and can move freely when blinking, adding interest to the performance. The eye outline of the Awakening Lion is surrounded by a ring of thick mane, with the eyelid connected to the eye socket by fabric, and the large eyeball is located in the centre of the eye socket. There are various materials for making eyeballs: wooden eyeballs are rustic and beautiful, but they are heavy and complex to make; the Guan Gong lion in Figure 4.15A uses plastic. The eyeballs made of

plastic have a variety of colour options, lightweight materials, and can even be connected to a lighting device to make it glow.

The styling of the old Guan Gong in the traditional Foshan Lion Head is unique. Apart from using three-dimensional lines to represent wrinkles on the forehead, the biggest difference from other lion head shapes lies in its eyes. Figure 4.15B shows the white mould of the old Guan Gong lion head, with the master holding the frame of its eyebrow shape, and C shows the final effect of this eyebrow structure. Luo (1980) wrote in "Romance of the Three Kingdoms": "Xuan De (Liu Bei) was greatly angered, his sleeping silkworm eyebrows raised, his ringed phoenix eyes wide open... Guan Yu (Guan Gong) held the Green Dragon Saber and rode the Red Hare horse". The craftsmen say that the design inspiration for the old Guan Gong model comes from "sleeping silkworm eyebrows and phoenix eyes". Guan Gong is an imposing figure. The sleeping silkworm eyebrows and phoenix eyes are prominent design features, and the imposing manner is the master's control of the lines and abstract artistic perception of the shape. In the interview data, many masters stated that the skills to make lions come from the teachings passed down from their predecessors. They stated that due to the lack of records and materials, many traditional detail designs have gradually been lost.



Figure 4.15: Display of Guan Gong Lion Eyes in Foshan (Foshan De Sheng, by Zhan 2022)

There is also a special small decoration above the lion's eyes, which the masters call the "tower incense" (Figure 4.15D). The design of the tower incense is similar to the large tower incense used in Chinese rituals, placed above both lion eyes. Interviewee B stated that burning incense to worship Buddha is part of Chinese ritual culture, symbolizing "safety", and is also a sign of auspiciousness.

g) Lion Horns

Horns, positioned at the top of the lion head mask. In the design of the Foshan lion head, there are various styles of horn design, which carrying positive connotations. The analysis perspective of the lion horns is illustrated in Figure 4.16.

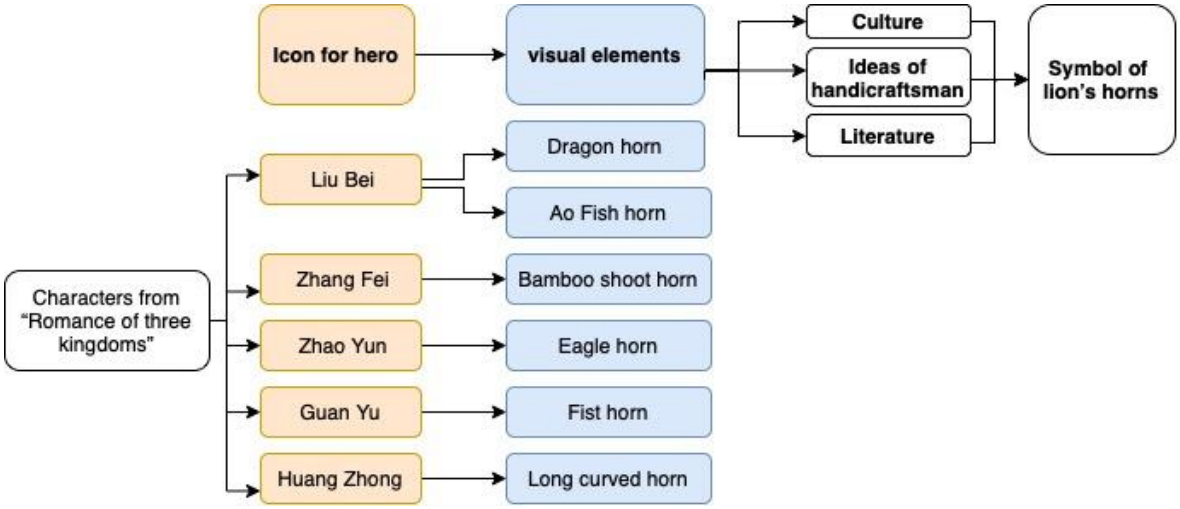


Figure 4.16: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Lion's Horns (by Zhan)

Artisans in Foshan who are engaged in making lion heads create various shapes on the horns of the lion. The 6 types of horn shapes shown in Figure 4.17 are all full of creativity and vivid.

Foshan is a famous city for arts and crafts in China. Among them, paper puppet craft is a unique skill of Foshan artisans. The Foshan paper puppet craft rose in the late Qing Dynasty. It can be made into various lifelike products with daily cheap raw materials or waste materials. The most well-known of this craft is the Foshan Autumn Colour crafts, whose lifelike degree is astonishing (Guo, 2019). Xie and Zhao (2022) pointed out the connection between Foshan Autumn Colour paper puppet craft and Foshan Lion Head. They said: The exquisite paper puppet craft makes lion head-made souvenirs and other derivative products of lion dance culture favoured by overseas markets. This makes it easy to understand why the modelling of Foshan Lion Heads is ingeniously done. The lion heads of Foshan have adopted the manufacturing techniques of paper puppetry, thus allowing for a greater variety of design styles in the production of lion head masks.

Figure 4.17 shows the shape of the lion horns. A is the dragon horn, which is generally used in Liu Bei lion. Yan (2006) said that the dragon has a variety of symbolic meanings in traditional Chinese culture. The most widely known is the symbol of “king power, imperial power”, the ancient Chinese kings called themselves “real dragon sons of heaven”; in folk beliefs, the dragon is considered a god with great power, who can summon wind and rain, and symbolizes auspiciousness. Therefore, the dragon-shaped horn in Liu Bei’s lion symbolizes auspiciousness and royal power, and this meaning coincides with the words of the inheritors. The dragon shape on the horn shown in the picture, with bright eyes, open mouth, colourful and momentum like a rainbow. The dragon horn shape adds details to the lion head of the Awakening Lion and gives it a rich cultural connotation.

B shows another type of horn design on Liu Bei’s lion head, called the Ao fish horn. Both Ao fish and dragons are animals in ancient Chinese mythology. The description of the Ao fish in native Chinese ancient books is “body like a fish, head as a dragon”, usually the central part of the stone steps of the ancient palace hall is carved with dragons and giant Ao fish. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the top scorer stood on the head of the Ao fish in the stone steps when he was awarded, hence the saying “monopoly of the Ao head” (Li, 2023). Therefore, the Ao fish-shaped horn is given the same “imperial power” meaning as the dragon, and also contains the auspicious meaning of “topping the list in the college entrance examination”.

The bamboo shoot horn on the top of Zhang Fei’s lion head is the most classic horn shape of the lion head mask. C shows the conventional bamboo shoot horn, the horn tip looks sharp and has momentum, it is neat and decisive, implying “decisive and resolute”. Interviewee B said that in order to shape the image of Zhang Fei’s bravery and

combativeness, some artisans would use steel materials to wrap the bamboo shoot horn, making it sturdier and more durable, and giving it a “powerful and bold” feeling.



Figure 4.17: Horns of Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

The picture D shows the eagle horn on Zhao Yun’s lion head. In the culture of the Chinese nation, the eagle is regarded as a divine bird. In ancient military, the eagle symbolizes the war god and is a representative of “bravery”. “Liezi·Emperor” records: the emperor defeated Chiyou, made the “Tong drum song” to celebrate, one of which “Eagle and Eagle Fight” is the earliest in China to use the eagle as a symbol of hero victory. Since then, the “eagle” has become a symbol of bravery and good warfare. Zhao Yun, also known as Zhao Zilong, is portrayed as a perfect general in “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”. He is brave and decisive, righteous, and ambitious (Yang, 2021). This can

explain why the inheritors incorporated the eagle's shaping elements into the design of Zhao Yun's lion head mask. The flying eagle-shaped horn gives Zhao Yun's lion the meaning of "brave and good at warfare, the general who always wins", thereby distinguishing it from the other several lion head characters who are also generals.

The horn of the Guan Gong lion is like a "fist", as shown in picture E, which looks like around ball structure is added to the top of the bamboo shoot horn. "Fist" and "power" are pronounced the same "quan" in Chinese, the inheritor said the "fist horn" was a design detail based on the characteristics of Guan Gong's character. Guan Yu, also known as Guan Gong, is a famous historical hero. To this day, his loyalty and hero stories are still sung by the world. Guan Gong is not only regarded as a cultural symbol symbolizing "protecting the country and the people" in China, but also as a deity for worship (Zheng, 2015). Li and Deng (2015) believe that the "loyalty, righteousness, benevolence, courage, etiquette, wisdom, and faith" of Guan Gong culture embody the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation and are the core values of folk ideology. Guan Gong is a general, but in the design of the Awakening Lion's lion head, it shows his "benevolence" feature, so its horn does not use the design of sharp bamboo shoot horn, but uses the round ball-shaped "fist horn" for modelling decoration.

The design of the long-curved horn (elephant nose horn) is not common, but it is very suitable for Huang Zhong's lion head. Huang Zhong is an old general among the Five Tiger Generals in "Romance of the Three Kingdoms". He, as an elder, is loyal and good at fighting, so Huang Zhong has become a symbol of "old and strong". The horn in picture F is a pointed horn, but it is long and bends downward, showing the elder's majesty, humility, and stability.

ii. Colour

As contemporary American art theorist Krausen (2020) stated, “Colour can reflect and evoke emotional responses”. This principle is well represented in the design of facial masks in Chinese dramas. The main characters of the traditional Foshan lion masks are the Liu Bei Lion, Guan Gong Lion, Zhang Fei Lion, Zhao Yun Lion, Ma Chao Lion, and Huang Zhong Lion. Each character has its own thematic colour, each with its own significance. There is a strong correlation between the colour scheme of these lion masks and the facial masks used in drama. The colours of the lion masks are also imbued with emotions and characteristics by the creators. （Figure 4.18）

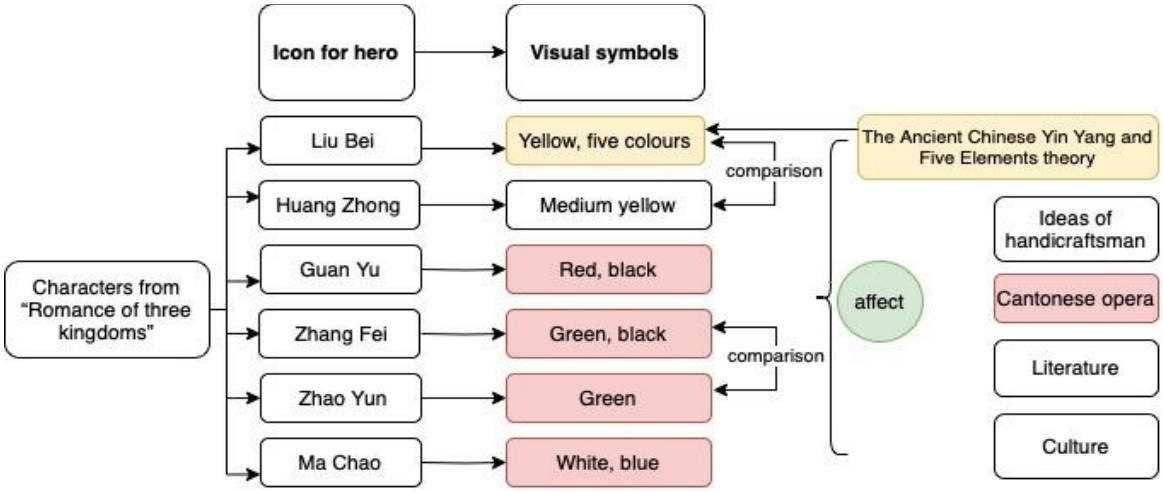


Figure 4.18: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Foshan Lion’s Colours (by Zhan)

a) Liu Bei Lion’s Colour Scheme

The lion mask of Liu Bei is uniquely characterized by a yellow base colour adorned with a multicoloured pattern. As shown in Figure 4.19, the five multi-angle Liu Bei lions from A-H are all presented in various colours. According to the inheritors, the

multicoloured pattern symbolizes the gathering of five fortunes and also represents the five directions of east, west, south, north, and centre, implying the unification of the realm. Upon observation, the multicoloured pattern represents not only five colours but a multitude of colours. The inheritors claim that the five colors are significantly connected to the Chinese theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements. It is one of the important systems of traditional Chinese culture, serving as the ancient Chinese theoretical foundation for explaining the opposition and mutual growth and decline of the two material forces, Yin and Yang, in the natural world. It also provides the philosophical basis for explaining the origin and diversity of all things in the universe (Lin, 2006). According to this theory, the universe is composed of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, which generate and overcome each other, and correspond to the cardinal directions: east, south, west, north, and center. The colors associated with the five elements are white, blue-green, black, red, and yellow respectively. （Table 4.3） However, as can be seen from the colour label below Figure 4.19, the colours are not limited to those of the Five Elements. The Liu Bei lion masks made by the inheritors are colourful, even incorporating fluorescent colours. Innovative colour combinations of Foshan lion masks should not be hastily defined as “disrespectful to tradition”, but rather seen as craftsmen’s personal insights into the design of the lion characters, which have evolved with changes in customer preferences and cultural backgrounds.

Table 4.3: Elements in The Ancient Chinese Yin Yang and Five Elements Theory

Five elements	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Five Direction	East	South	Centre	West	North
Five Colours	Cyan	Red	Yellow	White	Black

The main hue of the Liu Bei Lion is golden yellow. Yellow symbolizes land, territory, and centre. The emperor is the god of the centre, so yellow has been revered and monopolized by emperors throughout history, and is known as the colour of the emperor (Wang, 2007). Lion masks with a golden yellow and yellow-orange base resonate with Chinese associations of wealth and prosperity. The inheritors claim that in ancient times, golden yellow was the colour of the emperor, and that Liu Bei in The "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" was the Yellow Emperor, representing wealth, honour, and power. Xiao (2023) considers Liu Bei as a benevolent ruler with strategies, a well-portrayed positive character in The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, which aligns with the inheritors' understanding. Guan (2023) has a more precise definition of Liu Bei's image, suggesting that Liu Bei, during the decline of the Han ethnic regime in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, became the embodiment of the political ideal of "reviving the Han dynasty". Liu Bei became a classic representative of national revival. This theory aligns with the common saying that lion dance is the embodiment of the political ideal of "overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming", showing that Liu Bei Lion was recognized as a symbol of "national revival" in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.



Figure 4.19： Foshan Liu Bei Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan, 2023)

b) Huang Zhong Lion's Colour Scheme

The Huang Zhong Lion, symbolizing loyalty, predominantly features the colour yellow. As mentioned earlier, Huang Zhong is a respected veteran general, so in the traditional image of the Huang Zhong Lion, it should have a visual image with a yellow base, black eyes, white eyebrows, and a white beard.

Although both Liu Bei Lion and Huang Zhong Lion share a yellow colour scheme, there are differences in the types and proportions of yellow used. As shown in Figure 4.20, the yellow used in the Huang Zhong Lion is primarily a medium yellow, visually different from the golden yellow used in the Liu Bei Lion. The inheritors stated: Lemon yellow,

bright yellow, and golden yellow are lighter and clearer yellows, with a high level of brightness and saturation. Because of their high brightness, they are often used in eye-catching designs, suitable for the design of Liu Bei Lion, who is the emperor. Medium yellow is a deeper, richer yellow with an orange tone, giving a more stable feeling, making it particularly suitable for the design of Huang Zhong Lion. To demonstrate the characteristic of Huang Zhong as an "old general", white fur is used for the hair and beard decoration. Based on the researcher's on-site investigation, lion head makers exhibit a rather intuitive approach to color selection, often lacking precise terminology for colours. However, through years of repeated crafting, they have developed personal standards for colour selection and the colouring process.



Figure 4.20: Foshan Huang Zhong Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan, 2023)

According to Interviewee C, based on his colouring experience, the colour design scheme of the Huang Zhong Lion's head has a colour proportion of approximately 60% yellow, 30% white, and 10% other colours (mainly black, with a touch of red for embellishment). However, in artistic creation, this is not the only standard, and artisans can create based on their understanding of the character.

c) Guan Gong Lion's Colour Scheme

While the initial description of Guan Gong's image was introduced when discussing boxing corner earlier, Guan Gong also holds the title of "Martial God of Wealth". Zhao (2019e) explains the establishment of Guan Gong's status as the Martial God of Wealth, saying Guan Yu was not only brave and good at fighting, but also very good at accounting, thus earning him the title of "Master of Accounting" among the people. Additionally, "Shenxian Tongjian" records that Guan Gong has various roles such as attracting exam luck, wealth and protection for merchants. Ren (2010) mentions: 23 industries regard Guan Gong as their patron deity, symbolizing "successful business and fulfilment of all wishes". The establishment of the "God of Wealth" title provides another interpretation for the red face of Guan Gong.

The primary design for the Guan Gong Lion features a red base colour with black patterns. According to the craft inheritors, the colour combination of Guan Gong's red face and black hair originates from the facial makeup used in Beijing opera, a method that has been subsequently adopted in Cantonese opera. In "Romance of the Three Kingdoms", Guan Gong is described as "eight feet tall, a face redder than datese, phoenix eyes, silkworm eyebrows, and a five-chin long beard". The Beijing Opera mask used for Guan

Gong, symbolizing loyalty, integrity, and valour (Figure 4.21), perfectly aligns with the description of Guan Gong's appearance in the classic text.

Figure 4.22 shows the design and colour scheme of the Guan Gong Lion. The major colour scheme is dark red and bright red, paired with black fur, aligning with the facial makeup colours in the theatrical performance shown above. One difference is that in traditional Guan Gong Lions, artisans often use turquoise on the nose. It is explained that the turquoise nose represents the colour of the nose when angry, which shares the same design origins as the turquoise nose of the Zhang Fei Lion. The connection between the colour red and the "God of Wealth" title comes from the teachings of Feng Shui. Ding (2003) stated that in the Chinese theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, red represents fire, now symbolizing happiness, honour, luck, prosperity, and thriving.



Figure 4.21: Guan Gong's Facial Makeup (Baidu Scholar, 2022)

The red used in the Guan Gong Lion not only symbolizes Guan Gong's traits of "loyalty" and "valour", but also carries people's hopes for "financial prosperity, good luck, and thriving business". Therefore, the Guan Gong Lion is often used in lion dance performances for store openings, symbolizing "good luck in starting business" and "thriving business".



Figure 4.22: Foshan Guan Gong Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan, 2022)

d) Colour Schemes of Zhang Fei Lion and Zhao Yun Lion

Xu (2021) conducted an analysis on the “signified” meanings of the colours in Chinese opera facial masks, positing that these hues symbolize the character's personality. The audience can discern the character's traits through these colours: red signifies a man of loyalty, valor, and justice with robust vitality; black denotes an individual characterized by bravery and sincerity, albeit with a touch of impulsiveness; while green represents a person with a tempestuous and coarse disposition.

Although Zhang Fei Lion and Zhao Yun Lion both belong to the warrior category, these two characters do not have the same personality. However, in the colour spectrum of lion dance heads, both of them use a combination of black and green. According to the investigation by the researcher, the Foshan Huang Feihong Memorial Hall showcases the connection between Cantonese opera facial makeup and the lion head masks. Yu (2015) states that the lion head masks skillfully use colours to depict the artistic image of anthropomorphic facial makeup. Figure 4.23 shows the character design of Zhang Fei in traditional opera. The colour of his mask only has black and white. The eyes are depicted with large blocks of black, with the corners of the eyes lifted, creating a sense of valour. The black part of the mouth is connected to the beard, showing his momentum as a general. This colour combination accurately expresses Zhang Fei’s “brave, sincere” and “reckless” character traits. In the design of the Zhang Fei lion head (Figure 4.24), the blue nose emphasizes his “hot-tempered, rude” personality flaw. It’s evident that the artisans have a deep artistic understanding of the character of Zhang Fei.



Figure 4.23: Zhang Fei's Design in Traditional Opera (Baidu Scholar, 2022)

Figure 4.24 shows the colour combination of Zhang Fei's lion head. In the colour scheme of the lion head, the colour of Zhang Fei is not limited to black and white, and the proportion of green is also significant, forming a rich pattern decoration with black and white. In the colour combination, the creators also added grey as a finishing touch. It is said that the grey part occasionally uses silver because it will shine when it moves, making the stage effect better.



Figure 4.24: Foshan Zhang Fei Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan, 2023)

Interestingly, the colours used by the Zhao Yun Lion and the Zhang Fei Lion are the same. However, the proportion of colours used is different. Figure 4.25 shows the colour of Zhao Yun Lion's head, where the proportion of green is more significant. Zhang Fei Lion is mainly black and white, with green as embellishment; Zhao Yun Lion is mainly black and green, with white as decoration.



Figure 4.25: Foshan Zhao Yun Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan,2023)

In Beijing Opera performances, Zhao Yun is a likable character. Du (2014) stated that the Zhao Yun shaped by Beijing Opera artist Yang Xiaolou is not as impulsive as Zhang Fei, but instead embodies bravery with careful strategy and well-thought-out plans. Figure 4.26 is the performance design of Zhao Yun in the opera. Compared with the image of Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun's makeup does not use bright large colour blocks, but his bravery and righteousness are shown through his costume and movements. However, there are no green visual elements in the costume of Zhao Yun's character, but blue. Interviewee A proposed his opinion on this: Zhao Yun is invincible in "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", hence, he is called the invincible general. In Chinese artistic expression

culture, “always winning” is metaphorically described as “evergreen”, and “green” is expressed in green. The Zhao Yun Lion, adorned with a large area of green, reflects the lion head maker’s understanding of Zhao Yun’s lofty image. Although this setting is different from the colour of Beijing opera costume, its artistic expression still perfectly presents his character traits as the invincible general.



Figure 4.26: Zhao Yun’s Performance Design in Traditional Opera (Baidu Scholar, 2022)

e) Ma Chao Lion’s Colour Scheme

Ma Chao is also a brave and good warrior, but he carries a tragic hue. He was a prominent general born in a famous family during the Three Kingdoms period. However, his father and younger brother were beheaded by Cao Cao on the grounds of conspiracy, which killed more than 300 people in their family. Ma Chao vowed to avenge his family and tried to kill Cao Cao, but ultimately did not succeed. He later joined Liu Bei’s camp

but was not trusted, and he died in depression. (Tang. L., 2023). His costume in the Beijing Opera is mainly white and blue (Figure 4.27), and his character is still shaped to be brave and valiant.



Figure 4.27： Ma Chao's Performance Design in Traditional Opera (Baidu Scholar, 2022)

China News Network published a news on July 2013 titled "Funeral of Liu Jialiang, a Generation of Hong Fist Master and Famous Kung Fu Director". According to the news footage, three filial piety lions and nine plain lions performed a mourning performance on their knees at the funeral ceremony that day. The filial piety lions sometimes wailed and sometimes knelt down, making the atmosphere on the scene sad and solemn. After the ceremony, the three filial piety lions were burned in front of the spirit position (Figure 4.28).



Figure 4.28: The Funeral of Hong Fist Master Liu Jialiang (Bilibili Official Website, 2022)

Ma Chao Lion is known as the "Filial Piety Lion". The whole lion is white, occasionally adorned with blue, looks haggard, and its dance steps are sad, with a slow drumbeat. Since the "Filial Piety Lion" generally only appears at the funeral of highly respected people, it is also called the "Funeral Lion". The props of the filial piety lion will be burned after the ceremony, so traditional Ma Chao lion heads are not common. The Ma Chao lion shown in Figure 4.29 has some differences from the traditional "Filial Piety Lion". Different lion head makers have different understandings of this. Interviewee C believes that the Ma Chao lion, which combines blue and white, represents funerals. Traditional lion heads basically do not use blue, because blue is not an auspicious colour. Interviewee B, on the other hand, believes that today's lion dance is a mascot, so whether it uses blue or not, it can still represent auspiciousness. Interviewee H remained neutral on this point, because innovative lion head masks can be designed according to the customer's preferences, but completely deviating from traditional practices would indeed lead to cultural misunderstandings.



Figure 4.29： Foshan Ma Chao Lion Head and Colours (by Zhan, 2023)

The Ma Chao lion that appeared in the funeral ceremony in Figure 4.23 is mainly white, with black and blue as auxiliary colours for embellishment. The Ma Chao lion in Figure 4.29 uses a large area of blue, with white and black as auxiliary colours, and some patterns are drawn with orange to dilute the meaning of "mourning". This design is more aligned with Interviewee B's statement.

The symbolic meaning of colors within the visual elements of lion heads is the most complex, as factors such as region, experience, and demographics can alter their interpretation. Consequently, the use of blue in the lion head of the awakening lion has been a subject of controversy.

iii. Pattern

The patterns on the lion heads in Foshan can all be traced back to corresponding prototypes in traditional Chinese patterns. Based on this foundation, researchers analyze the narratives of interviewees, results of literature analysis, and the understanding of traditional Chinese culture. (Figure 4.30)

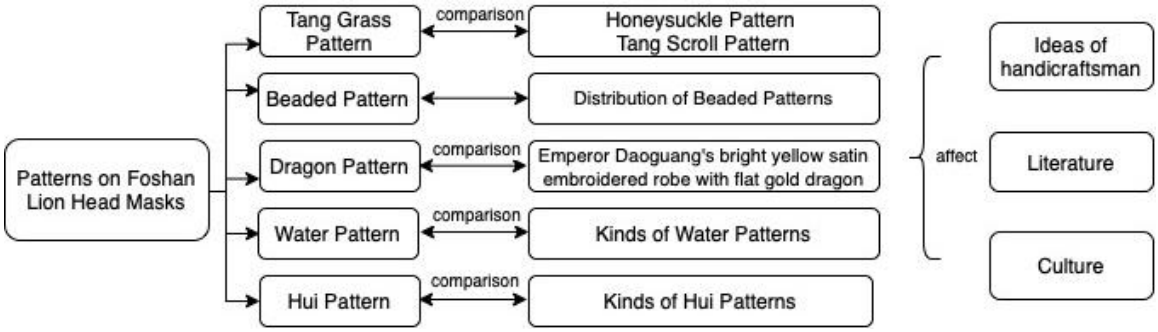


Figure 4.30： Symbolic Analysis Digram of Foshan Lion's Patterns (by Zhan)

a) Tang Grass Pattern

The Tang Grass Pattern (Tang Scroll Pattern) is one of the traditional Chinese patterns, comprised of a combination and mutation of various plant motifs. Its origin can be traced back to the Han Dynasty's "Scroll Grass Pattern", and the scroll grass pattern of the Wei and Jin Dynasties often appeared in combination with honeysuckle and lotus flower motifs. With the cultural development of the Sui and Tang Dynasties entering a glorious period of full prosperity, this pattern was often combined with various flowers, expressing a rich and auspicious picture in a blooming appearance (Liu, 2019). Zhu (2022) states: The Tang Scroll Pattern is also referred to as "Scroll Grass Pattern" or "Vine Pattern". It's a fundamental pattern decorating Southern Lion masks and is abstracted and

refined from traditional Tang Scroll Patterns, symbolizing vitality and good fortune. Figure 4.31 shows the pattern shape of the honeysuckle. The honeysuckle pattern is derived from the plant “honeysuckle” (also known as lonicera flower), with a simple shape, and its pattern structure is single and continuously repeated in C or S shape.

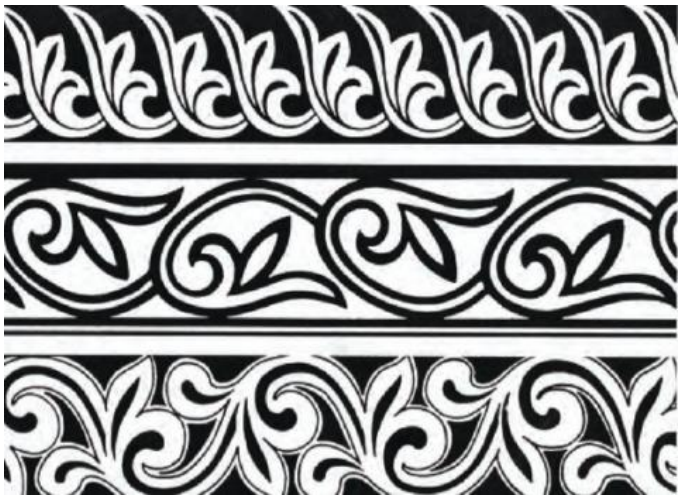


Figure 4.31: Honeysuckle Pattern (Baidu Encyclopaedia, 2022)

The term “Tang Grass Pattern” specifically refers to the “Scrolling Grass Pattern” from the Tang Dynasty, characterized by complex and elaborate designs. Figure 4.32 illustrates the Tang grass patterns from the early Tang, flourishing Tang, and late Tang periods, showing a gradual evolution from simple to intricate patterns, with the rolling and swirling motifs being highly vibrant and decorative.(Figure 4.32)

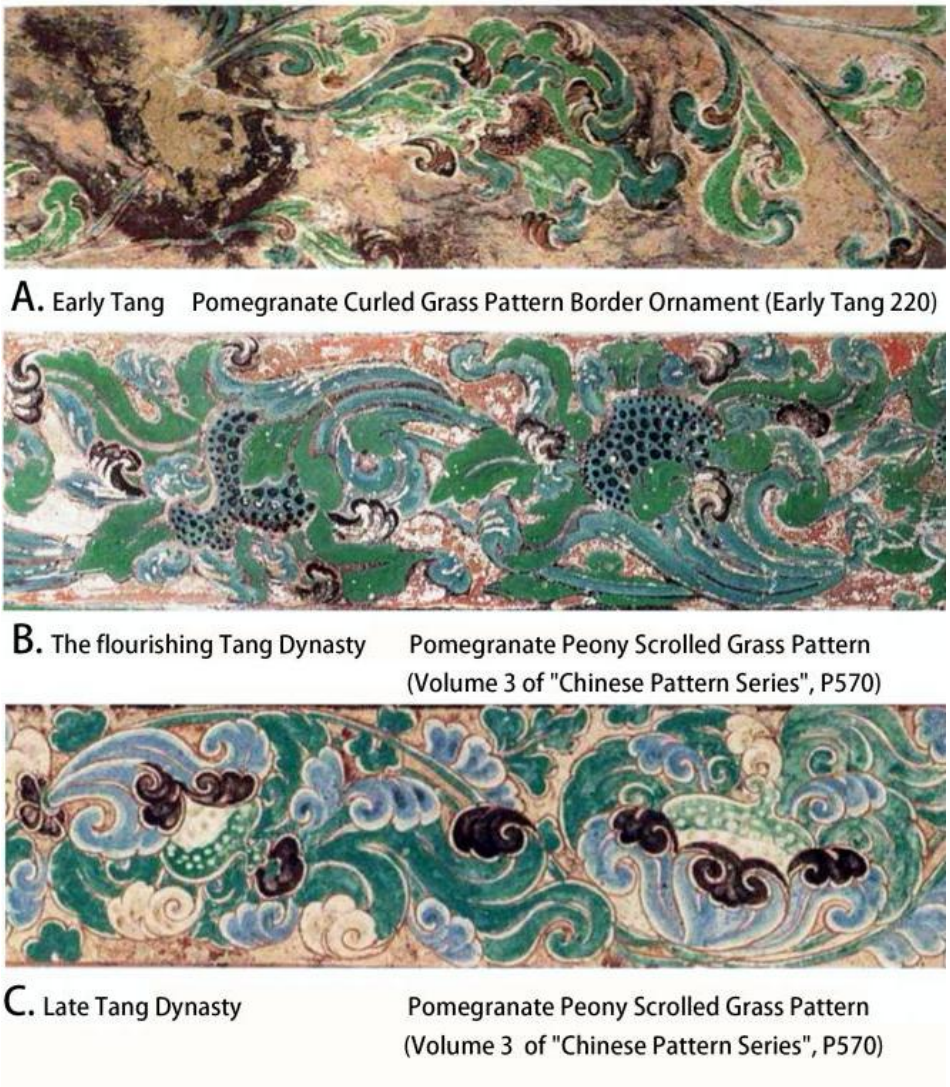


Figure 4.32: Tang Scroll Patterns of Different Periods (Li, 2018)

In the Foshan Lion Heads, patterns called “Tang Scroll Patterns” are roughly as shown in Figure 4.33, parts A-H. Interviewee C said that the Tang Scroll Pattern is primarily used to make the lion’s mane appear more vigorous, adding visual dynamics to the lion’s head. To demonstrate the lion’s might, knife patterns are often combined with Tang Scroll Patterns in the creation. As understood from the on-site interview, the “knife pattern” in lion dance refers to a pattern resembling a “blade”. Interestingly, there is no

traditional Chinese graphic terminology for “knife pattern” or “small knife pattern”. This blade-like “knife pattern” only exists in the patterns of lion head masks. A’s Tang Scroll Pattern is very similar to the small knife pattern, and attention must be paid to the force of the brushstroke to create a sharp effect; B’s “Tang Scroll Pattern” is quite similar to the honeysuckle pattern, simple curves paired with sharp “small knife patterns,“ rich in detail; C, D, E are known as “Scroll Grass Patterns“ simulating animal fur fluttering in the wind, representing specific existing objects, namely “animal hair”; F shows a more visually rich effect when Tang Scroll Pattern is used in conjunction with the Beaded Pattern; G’s pattern has similarities to the Late Tang period’s scroll grass pattern, but with differences in colour composition and complexity; H shows a curled but irregular “Scroll Grass Pattern”. Since there is a discrepancy between historical records and on-site research findings, this section’s content will be compared and verified in the discussion chapter.



Figure 4.33: Tang Scroll Patterns in Foshan Lion Heads (by Zhan, 2023)

b) Beaded Pattern

The Beaded Pattern, also known as “continuous Beaded Pattern” or “string Beaded Pattern”, is a pattern of consecutive dots, which can form a circular shape, or irregular shapes according to the contour of the main decorative image (Yan, 2021). The combination styles are mostly adjusted according to the needs of the creator. The dot-like patterns, like beads, can be large or small. The intervals between the dots are generally equidistant but there are no specific standards, and there is no fixed rule for the arrangement of the beads. Therefore, the Beaded Pattern is very suitable for decoration. (Sun, 2021) stated: In traditional Chinese culture, a circle symbolizes completeness and reunion. The combination of one or more beads expresses the meaning of completeness. The Beaded Pattern used in Chinese ceramics is often juxtaposed with animals symbolizing “completeness” in China (such as: mandarin ducks), all of which indicate that the Beaded Pattern has been endowed with auspicious implications and the people’s aspiration for a better life.

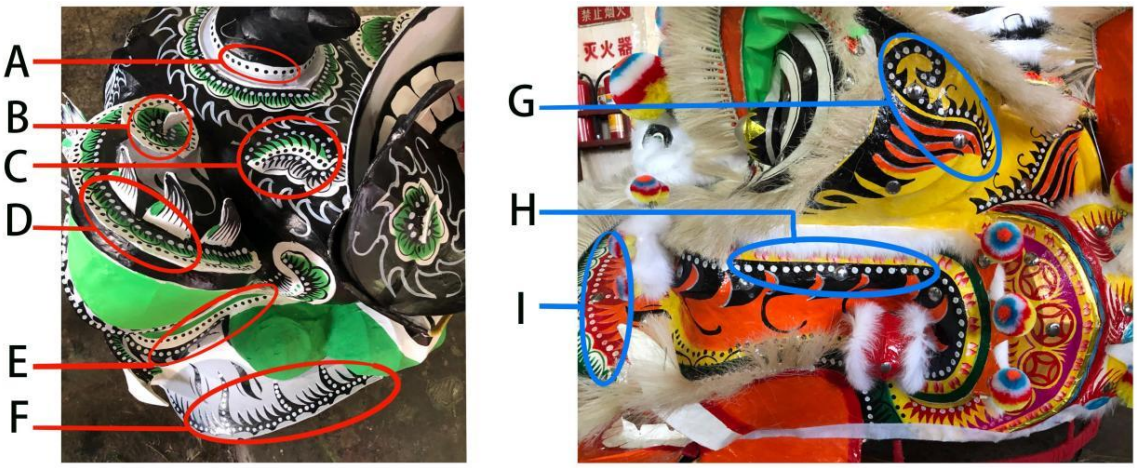


Figure 4.34: Beaded Pattern in Foshan Lion’s Head (by Zhan, 2023)

Figure 4.34 shows the distribution of Beaded Patterns on the lion's heads of randomly selected different characters. The Beaded Patterns circled in A, B, D, E, H, and I in the lion's head mask all play a decorative role, following the changes in the contour of the shape. The beaded dots in C, F, and G are on top of other textures, enriching the visual effects of other patterns. It can be seen that the use and meaning of the Beaded Patterns on the lion's head in the lion dance are completely consistent with the traditional Beaded Pattern.

c) Dragon Pattern

The symbolic meaning of the dragon has been introduced above. Using the image of the dragon in the character design represents the royal power symbolized by the dragon. Yellow is used in the colour, symbolizing the emperor, the power of the emperor, the colour of the son of heaven belonging to the dragon.



Figure 4.35: Dragon Pattern in Foshan Lion's Head (by Zhan, 2023)

Figure 4.35 shows the decorative effect of patterns based on the dragon's shape on the lion's head. The dragon pattern in the figure is entrenched in multiple places such as the lion's face, cheeks, etc. The design of decorating the entire lion's head with dragon patterns is quite unique. It has high requirements for the painting skills of the master who draws the patterns, so the design of "Dragon Pattern" is not common.

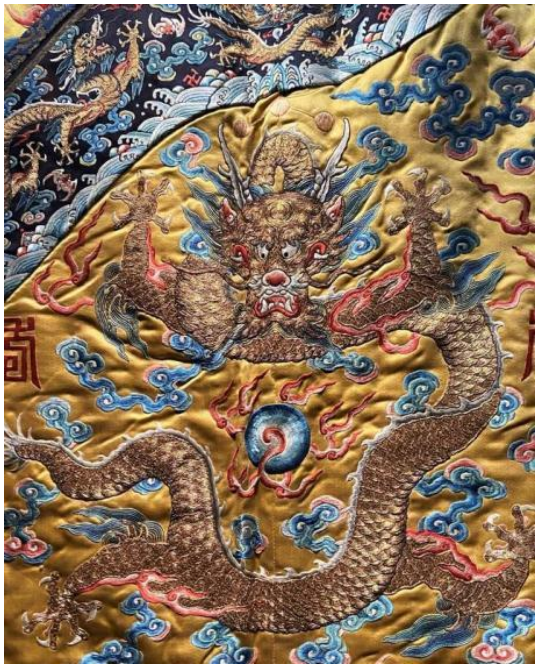


Figure 4.36: Part of Emperor Daoguang's Bright Yellow Satin Embroidered Robe with Flat Gold Dragon (Baidu Encyclopedia Oiffcial Website, 2022)

The dragon is an ancient totem of the Chinese nation, a common spiritual pillar of the entire society, and the dragon pattern that continues to the Qing Dynasty has become a symbol of imperial power and auspicious patterns that can only be used in the royal family (Wang, 2019). Because the dragon is an animal in ancient Chinese mythology, it does not actually exist, so when depicting the dragon in various dynasties, it is very imaginative, but the dragon pattern of the Qing Dynasty has a relatively stable image, most of which is

shown on the emperor's dragon robe (Figure 4.36). It can be seen that decorating clothing with dragon patterns is not only limited to the symbolic meaning of auspiciousness, but also has a clear indicative meaning, the son of heaven is "dragon". The Foshan Lion Head can be traced back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, so the earliest traditional lion head shape could not be decorated with dragon patterns. From this, it can be judged that the lion head image in Figure 4.35 is a modern design created by the master based on the concept of "Liu Bei is the emperor".

d) Water Pattern

Classic Chinese patterns often reflect a yearning for a beautiful and happy life. Water Patterns are often used alongside other symbols of auspiciousness in China, such as the sea of fortune and longevity, peace across the four seas, and Liu Hai playing with the Golden Toad (which also symbolizes wealth and luck in China). Therefore, it carries the meaning of wealth, continuity, and longevity (Xu, 2020). In Guangdong, "water equals wealth" is a consensus among local residents. This explains why the auspicious Foshan Lion Head mask has Water Patterns. Although there are many types of wave patterns, the Water Patterns painted on the lion head mask need to consider its fit with the lion head shape.

Figure 4.37 shows the Water Patterns on the lion dance mask. A is the "Ming and Qing Dynasties Emperor Temple Seawater River Cliff Carving", representing the highest level of specification and the most solemn and luxurious royal style, emphasizing the tumultuous momentum of the whirlpool and weakening the handling of waves (Liu, 2017). The Water Pattern painted on the cheek of the lion head in picture H is similar to it. D is a

vortex pattern outlined by the researcher with lines, and E is also a water wave pattern that represents overlapping waves extracted from A; the wave pattern structure line extracted from the texture on the vase body of the spiral pattern colour pottery in B is also significantly similar to the water wave pattern shape on the lion head mask in I; The neat water wave pattern depicted in G is designed based on the layer upon layer of wave shape shown in C, "Light Yellow Ground Powder Coloured Seawater River Cliff Peach Bat Pattern Flower Mouth Flower Pot", and the water wave pattern surrounding the lion's mouth in picture J is similar to this shape, but not exactly the same.



Figure 4.37: Water Patterns. A: Ming and Qing Dynasties Emperor Temple Seawater River Cliff Carving, B: Whirl Pattern Colour Pottery Vase, C: Light Yellow Ground Powder Coloured Seawater River Cliff Peach Bat Pattern Flower Mouth Flower Pot (Qing Guangxu, cultural relics collected by the Beijing Palace Museum); D, E, F, G drawn by Zhan；H, I, J photographed by Zhan

The Water Pattern is a C-shaped, S-shaped, or spiral pattern, which softens the fierceness of other lines on the lion head, making the lion head present both a powerful and pleasing image.

e) Hui Pattern

The design of the returning pattern is like the Chinese character "回" (Hui). It is composed of straight lines and bends, and the pattern structure is stable, presenting a solemn and orderly feeling. It is often seen on the bronzes of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties in our country, often used alongside auspicious patterns such as Taotie and Kui dragon, and its stable and orderly arrangement displays a profound and majestic beauty (Li and Ji, 2021). In folk culture, the Hui pattern symbolizes "endless wealth", which is closely related to its shape. Figure 4.38 A shows the pattern on the Song Dynasty Jizhou Kiln underglaze brown-coloured lotus and lotus pattern three-foot stove. The two ends are returning patterns formed by a single complex "回" shape or two "回" shapes connected together; B is a continuous returning pattern in Song Dynasty stationery ceramics, characterized by a relatively simple single return character, with two single bodies connected end to end, forming a one-stroke continuous returning pattern; C shows the returning pattern jade of the Spring and Autumn Period, as shown in F, its returning pattern shape is simple, with two "Hui" characters symmetrically connected.



Figure 4.38: Hui Patterns. A, B, C (Baidu Scholar, 2023) ; D, E, F (by Zhan, 2023)

Figure 4.39 shows the Hui Pattern that surrounds the lion's horn in A and the one that surrounds the mouth in B, both are similar to the above figure F, but the Hui pattern presented on the lion's head is a S-structured scroll pattern composed of two Hui-shaped single bodies. Since the scroll pattern appears in a continuous style in most cases, symbolizing endless and successive coming (Song, 2017). But in fact, except for the E shown above which is a true continuous Hui Pattern, the other two are only visually continuous, but not actually continuous. As shown in Figure 4.39, B shows a clear single Hui Pattern, but it is still visually closely connected. Therefore, the implication of "uninterrupted wealth and honor" does not mean the "continuity" in the figure, but the sense of continuity produced visually. And it has the symbolic meaning of "endless continuity" that Chinese tradition has given it.

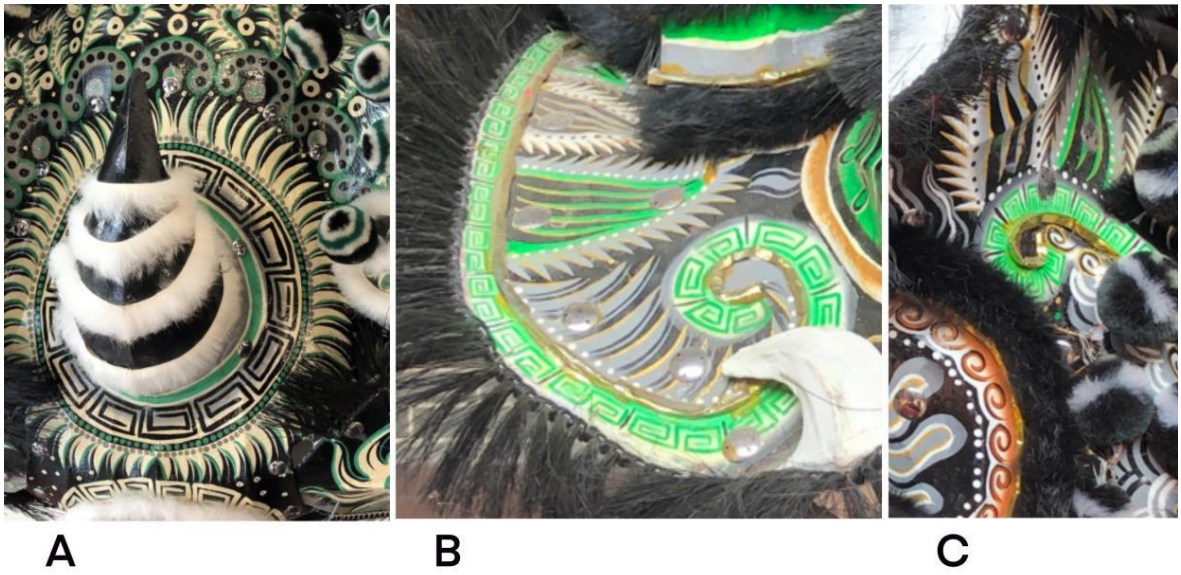


Figure 4.39: Hui Patterns in Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

Comprehensively considering the usage of several patterns, it can be seen that the patterns used on Foshan Lion Heads are not simply a patchwork, the arrangement of patterns and the design of shapes are greatly related. Almost all graphics need to consider their visual performance effects in the shape. The Tang grass pattern shows the hair style, but the details of the texture not only have the purpose of bionic, but also consider the composition needs of the decoration position. Therefore, the Tang grass pattern on the lion's head is not unchanging, its arrangement, style, size, length, and shortness will be adjusted according to the orally handed down colour tradition and the aesthetics of the craftsman. Apart from their auspicious meanings, scroll patterns, ripple patterns, and other types of textures mostly serve the purpose of "decoration" and "rich details".

iv. Decoration

This section introduces the colors, materials, and other aspects of various elements in “decoration” (Figure 4.40), which primarily aiming to provide a basis for comparative research with lion heads from other regions in subsequent sections.

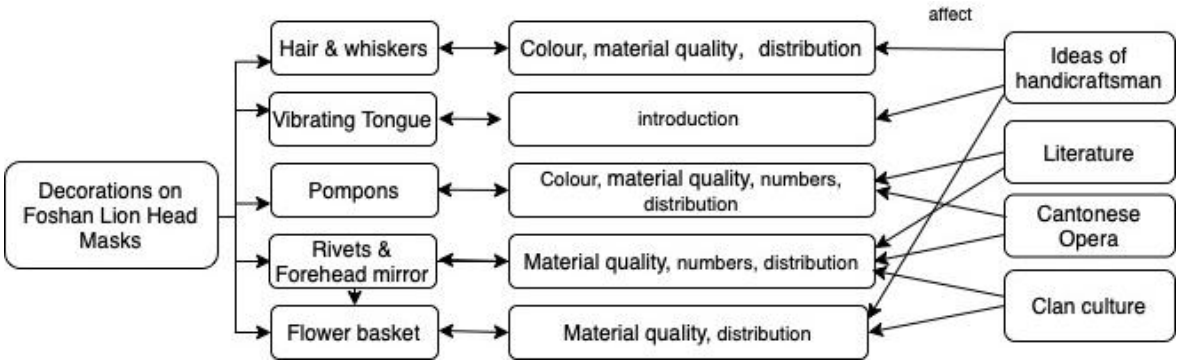


Figure 4.40: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Foshan Lion’s Decorations (by Zhan)

a) Hair and Whiskers

The hair and whiskers in traditional Foshan Lion Heads are affectionately called “toothbrush whiskers” by the locals, and their material is horse mane. Horse mane is hard in texture, as eyelashes, eyebrows decorated around the lion’s eyes, the hair stands up, highlighting the “awakening” of the lion; as whiskers decorated on the upper lip, it highlights the majestic momentum when the lion’s mouth is wide open; as long whiskers on the chin, the shape is similar to the general with long temples and long beards in Chinese opera, appearing majestic. The white hair of the lion head in Figure 4.41 A enhances its mighty aura. The short white hair decorated on the nose in B and wrapped around the lion’s horn in C is rabbit hair, which has now been replaced by artificial hair. Artificial hair has a variety of colours and is cheap, it has gradually become a common material for innovative style lion heads.



Figure 4.41: Hair and Whiskers in Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

According to interviewees A, B, C, G, H, and I, traditional toothbrush bristles are limited to only two colours: black and white. Generally, older or senior characters are depicted using white bristles, while younger and more vigorous characters typically use black bristles.

b) Vibrating Tongue

The "three-dimensional and vibrating tongue" is also a distinctive feature of Foshan Lion Head. As the name suggests, the tongue vibrates when the lion head is danced, showing the innovative spirit of the craftsmen who make Foshan Lion Heads. The lion's tongue is three-dimensional and has twists and turns (Figure 4.42). A spring is installed at the bottom of the tongue, and when the performer dances the lion head, the tongue will move along with the pompons. In lion dance performances, there are many opening and closing movements of the mouth, so the shaking lion tongue will make the performance more visually detailed.



Figure 4.42: The Tongue in Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

c) Pompons

Pompons are important decorations on the lion head mask, and the colourful pompons decorations can be seen in all four major Guangdong lion dance lion head masks. The pompons decoration originates from the influence of Cantonese opera culture. Figure 4.43 shows a performer in Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre, and the pompons on the headgear are the source of inspiration for the lion head mask.



Figure 4.43: Pompons in Cantonese Opera (Official website of Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre, 2023)

Lion head culture is influenced by various cultures in Lingnan, among which Cantonese opera is one. According to the "Foshan Zhongyi Township Chronicles", during the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, the establishment of the Cantonese opera troupe in the Qionghua Club in Foshan marked the formation of Cantonese opera in Foshan (Luo, 2013). The Foshan Huang Feihong Memorial Hall also records the history of the Cantonese opera "The True Story of Huang Feihong" in 1944 (Figure 4.44), showing the inseparable relationship between the colour and decoration of the Foshan Lion Head and the shape of Cantonese opera.



Figure 4.44: Foshan Huang Feihong Memorial Hall (by Zhan, 2023)

The pompons decorations in the lion head are colourful and varied in size (Figure 4.45). Zhou (2014) described the pompons on the Foshan Lion Head, saying that they are located not only around the Tianling one or two circles and the sides of the nose, but also

one behind each ear, and their colours are similar to the theme colour of the lion head role. According to observations and introductions by craftsmen, there must be at least one circle of pompons around the mirror on the forehead, the number of which is generally no less than 8, and two larger pompons need to be installed on both sides of the lion's nose. The number and arrangement of pompons in other locations are not specifically regulated, which has a lot to do with the preferences of buyers or the aesthetics of craftsmen. The colours of the pompons are rich and varied, not limited to the same colour combinations, and can even be contrasting colour combinations.



Figure 4.45: Pompons in Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

d) Rivets and Forehead Mirror

There are several reflective rivets around the eyeballs of the Foshan Lion Head (Figure 4.46). With the increasing abundance of modern materials, some rivets have been replaced with sequins, and some factories will use slightly yellow copper pieces. According to the interviewees, the rivet decoration will make the lion dance sparkle when

dancing, and there is also a saying that it “Exorcise evil spirits”. However, not every Foshan Lion Head will have rivet decorations.

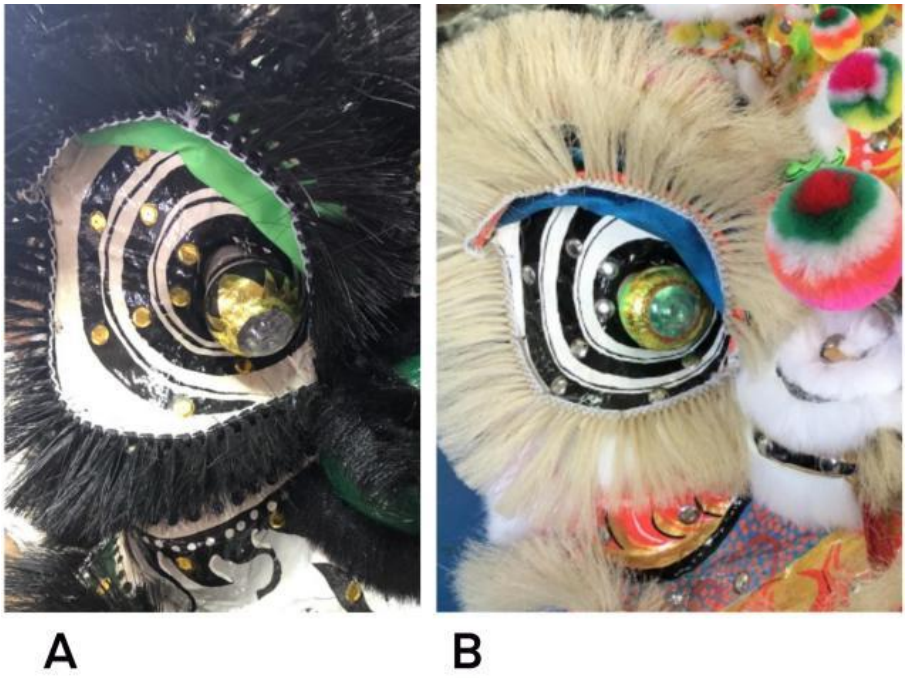


Figure 4.46: Rivets on Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

The forehead mirror, which is also a reflective sequin, is an important decoration of the lion dance head, but this decoration cannot be missing (Figure 4.47). Interviewee C said that the mirror on the forehead of the lion head is a mirror that can exorcise demons and avoid evil. In front of the male lion, all demons and ghosts need to retreat. Its function is similar to that of the Chinese Ba Gua mirror. Liu (2002) has made a deeper analysis of the relationship between mirrors and Chinese traditional culture. He said that ancient people wore bright bronze mirrors on their bodies and hung a small bronze mirror on the lintel of their houses to use the spiritual power of mirrors to ward off evil and seek good luck. In addition, the “Western Qiang Biography” in the “Later Han Book” says “Or carry

a board to use as a shield, or hold a bronze mirror to resemble a soldier" reflecting the Qiang people's belief that the mirror has spiritual power and can help them defeat the enemy; in the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" and "Water Margin", there are mentions of generals wearing a protective heart mirror on their chests during battle. Its function is not only to defend against enemy attacks, but also a kind of self-suggestion to protect oneself. The discovery of a large number of weapons, including 77 protective heart mirrors, in the "Hunnu Xichagou Culture" ancient tomb group also proves its practical existence function.

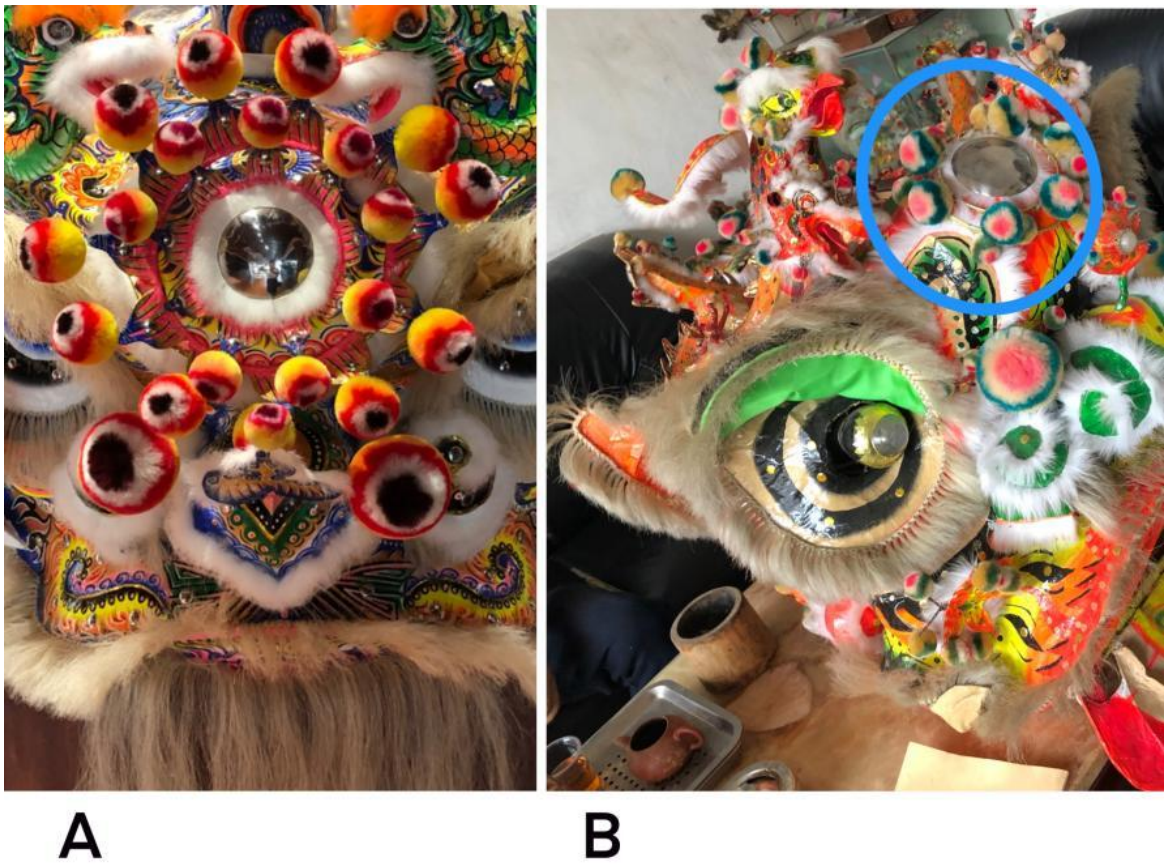


Figure 4.47: The Forehead Mirror of Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

The reflective mirror shown in picture A is installed on the forehead of the lion head, surrounded by two circles of exaggerated and colourful pompons, forming a visually central style of emission; from B, the forehead mirror is located in the most prominent position on the lion's forehead, and its emphasized traditional cultural connotation cannot be ignored. According to field investigations, the forehead mirrors of all lion dance lion head masks are indispensable, and their installation positions and quantities are consistent.

e) Flower Basket

The flower basket in the lion head mask serves as a place to inscribe the name of the maker. It's located at the back of the lion dance mask, a tradition deeply rooted in the ancestral hall culture of Guangdong. Clan members participate in ceremonial activities to pay tribute to their ancestors, effectively forming a platform for cultural identification. Participating in these ceremonial activities is the epitome of ancestral hall cultural education (Li, 2021). These ceremonies include the lion dance performance during the lunar new year. Numerous villages in different regions of Guangdong have their own clan lion dance teams, which perform on specific days during the lunar new year, and they also invite neighboring teams to offer greetings and celebrate together.

Each lion dance team has its own clan uniform and customized lion dance props, including lion head masks and large banners inscribed with the name of the village or surname. The flower basket at the back of the lion head mask is where the name of the lion team is inscribed. Figure 4.48 shows different styles of flower baskets. A depicts a flower basket of a lion head mask under construction, the space reserved for team's name inscription is visible, and it is adorned with decorations like small wings, pompons, and

rivets; B showcases a flower basket with simpler decorations, yet its design aligns well with the overall style and doesn't seem out of place; C, although seeming quite rudimentary, serves the same purpose as the previous ones.



Figure 4.48: Flower Basket of Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

4.3.3.3 Analysis and Summary of Factors Affecting the Visual Symbol in Foshan Lion Head

Foshan is recognized as the birthplace of the lion dance culture, and its lion head designs have profoundly influenced those in Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi. Consequently, an in-depth analysis of all visual symbols in Foshan lion head masks is an essential step in this research. The preceding discussion highlights that each visual symbol on the Foshan lion head corresponds to specific local cultural concepts. The design not only showcases the exquisite craftsmanship involved in creating lion head masks and their symbolic meanings of "lion" and "awakening", but also integrates elements of lion dance culture, emphasizing the interplay between the dynamic performance and the mask's form.

The use and arrangement of colors in these masks carry significant symbolic meaning. These colour-related visual symbols not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the lion head masks but also effectively convey their symbolic meanings and the unique lion head culture to the public. At this stage, the primary focus is on interpreting the traditional patterns of Foshan Lion Heads. However, the application of innovative patterns will be further explored in comparison with innovative designs from other regions in subsequent sections.

The decorations on the lion heads incorporate elements from Cantonese opera, primarily to enhance the visual appeal and richness of the masks. Nonetheless, these decorative elements are not the primary visual symbols for conveying cultural connotations.

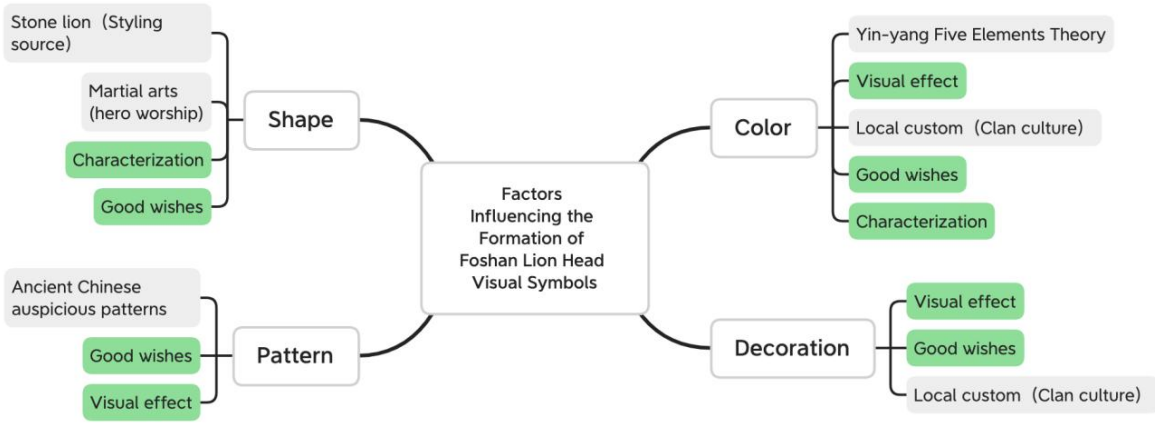


Figure 4.49: Factors Influencing Visual Symbols of Foshan Lion Heads (by Zhan)

Figure 4.49 presents an analysis of the factors influencing the formation of visual symbols in Foshan lion heads. A detailed examination of these factors reveals their varying impacts on the visual elements of Foshan lion heads. The sections highlighted in green

represent more flexible factors, indicating that these aspects can be adjusted and modified over time in response to changing audience preferences and the creative visions of the makers. These flexible factors reflect the adaptability and dynamism of Foshan lion heads in meeting contemporary aesthetic and cultural demands.

In contrast, the light gray sections represent immutable factors, which constitute the core cultural essence and fundamental characteristics of Foshan lion heads. Altering these core values would jeopardize the cultural identity and symbolic significance of the lion heads, posing a risk of cultural disintegration. These core values are highly representative and stable, ensuring continuity and consistency in the cultural heritage of Foshan lion heads.

Although certain factors, such as “isual effect” or “auspicious wishes”, can be adjusted, such modifications must adhere to a specific internal logic and be implemented gradually. Revolutionary changes are not permissible, as they could lead to a rupture and loss of traditional culture. This internal logic encompasses a profound understanding and respect for the cultural symbolisms and meanings, as well as a commitment to preserving and enhancing traditional craftsmanship and aesthetic principles.

Therefore, in the process of innovation and modification, it is crucial to carefully balance the relationship between these core values and the flexible factors. Only by ensuring that the core cultural elements are well-preserved while appropriately introducing new design concepts and aesthetic elements can the Foshan lion heads maintain their traditional cultural charm and simultaneously gain modern vitality and developmental potential. This approach not only aids in the protection and transmission of Foshan lion

head culture but also promotes its innovation and regeneration in contemporary cultural contexts.

4.3.4 Visual Symbol Analysis of Guangzhou Lion Head

4.3.4.1 Overview and Analysis Framework of Visual Symbol in Guangzhou Lion Head

In a online publication from the Guangdong Provincial Cultural Museum (2018), the characteristics of the Guangzhou Lion Head were meticulously delineated. The report delineated: “The epicenters for lion head craftmanship are predominantly situated in Guangzhou and Foshan. One salient and distinctive feature of the Guangzhou Lion Head is its emphasis on the pronounced fullness of its forehead and cheeks, endowing it with a more formidable and commanding presence”. While many visual elements of the Guangzhou Lion Head closely mirror those of the Foshan variant, subtle nuances do exist. Comprehensive data derived from qualitative interviews and rigorous field investigations conducted within the Guangzhou vicinity provide further insights into these intricate distinctions. The synthesized findings and comparative insights are systematically catalogued in the subsequent Table 4.4 for a more in-depth analysis.

According to the literature, most of the craftsmanship and visual element designs of Guangzhou Lion Heads originate from the influence of Foshan Lion Heads. Foshan is situated to the southwest of Guangzhou, and because the two cities are adjacent and the residents interact closely, there is a saying “Guangzhou and Foshan are one city”. The information in the above table comes from Appendix B. After collating the information, it is clear that the Foshan Lion Head’s influence on the Guangzhou Lion Head is quite apparent; among the 54 project keywords, 37 items are almost identical to the visual

elements of Foshan Lion Head, 8 items are influenced by Heshan Lion Head, and 9 items are influenced by other factors. The contents involved in the other influences are mainly concentrated on the attributes of the interviewees and user feedback.

Table 4.4: Feedback Table for Interviews and On-the-spot Investigation on Guangzhou Lion Head

Feedback Structure Table for Interviews and On-the-spot Investigation on Guangzhou Lion head			
	Influenced by Foshan lion head handicrafts (37 items)	Influenced by Heshan lion head handicrafts (8 items)	Others (9 items)
54 items	Shape: Cheek — Double cheeks; Ears; Nose; Mouth; Eyes; Horn: Dragon Horn; Huge legendary turtle Horn; Bamboo Shoot Horn; Long Curved Horn; Eagle Horn; Dimensions — Foshan-style lion; Proportion — Foshan-style lion Color: Traditional: Icon; Index; Symbol; Modern: Icon; Index; Symbol; Attributes — Innovation should carry auspicious meanings; Relationship: According to customer's preferences or requests; Customer don't pay much attention Pattern: Traditional: Icon; Index; Symbol; Modern: Icon; Index; Symbol; Attributes — Inheritor of Skill; Relationship — Auspicious patterns Decoration: Hair, Beard — Traditional — Black or white toothbrush mustache; Tongue: Traditional — Vibrate; Modern — Draw /Vibrate; Pompon — Cantonese Opera; Rivet — Traditional; Basket — Style; Mirror; Others	Shape: Cheek — Round cheeks; Nose; Mouth; Horn — Fist Horn; Dimensions — Heshan-style lion; Proportion — Heshan-style lion Decoration: Hair, Beard — Modern — Colorful woolen; Tongue — Modern — Draw /Vibrate	Shape: Attributes: Job position; Style characteristics; Understanding of lion head characters; Relationship: Belief; Preference Decoration: Rivet — Modern; Basket — Character; Attributes — Performer of lion dance; Relationship — The patterns used are mainly auspicious symbols.

Therefore, the analysis of Guangzhou Lion Head's visual symbols should be based on the analysis results of Foshan Lion Head. As shown in Figure 4.50, the visual elements of Foshan Lion Heads all have an impact on Guangzhou Lion Heads. Under the influence

of the craftsmanship, creative consciousness of the Guangzhou Lion Head makers, or customer demands, the visual symbols of Guangzhou Lion Heads have undergone minor changes. The changes signify innovation, which are then fed back into the creation of Foshan Lion Heads, and the competition in the industry has led to the continuation and development of the lion dance tradition.

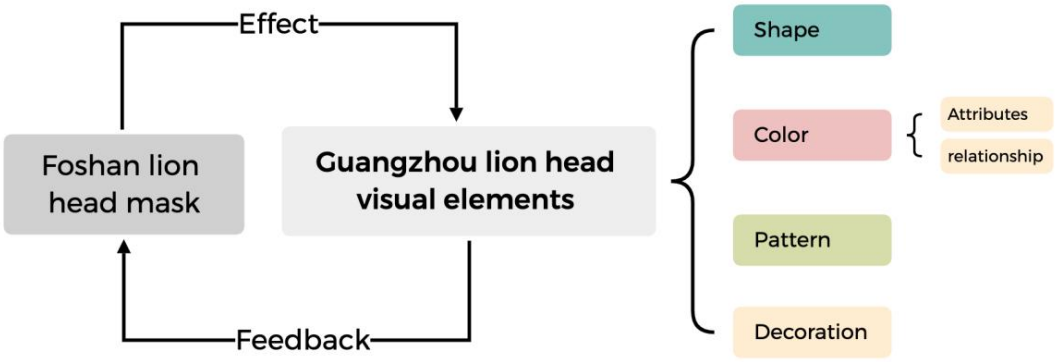


Figure 4.50: Analysis Framework of Guangzhou Lion Head's Visual Symbols (by Zhan)

4.3.4.2 Guangzhou Lion Head's Visual Elements Details and Symbols

In order to ensure rigorousness and prevent redundancies in the analytical process, this particular section narrows its scope and specifically emphasizes those distinct aspects wherein the visual elements of Guangzhou Lion Heads manifest noticeable deviations compared to the visual attributes of Foshan Lion Heads.

i. Shape

As delineated in Table 4.1, the morphological configuration of the Guangzhou Lion Head closely aligns with that of its Foshan counterpart. In the visual representation provided in Figure 4.51, reference points labeled A, B, C, D, E, and F specifically

demarcate the design elements pertaining to the mouth, nose, horn, eyes, cheeks, and ears of the Guangzhou Lion Head, respectively. Drawing upon the archival documents coupled with the anecdotal evidence derived from the testimonies of interviewees D, E, and F, it is discerned that the artisanal techniques and underlying symbolic connotations associated with the Guangzhou Lion Heads bear a striking resemblance to those inherent in the Foshan Lion Heads.

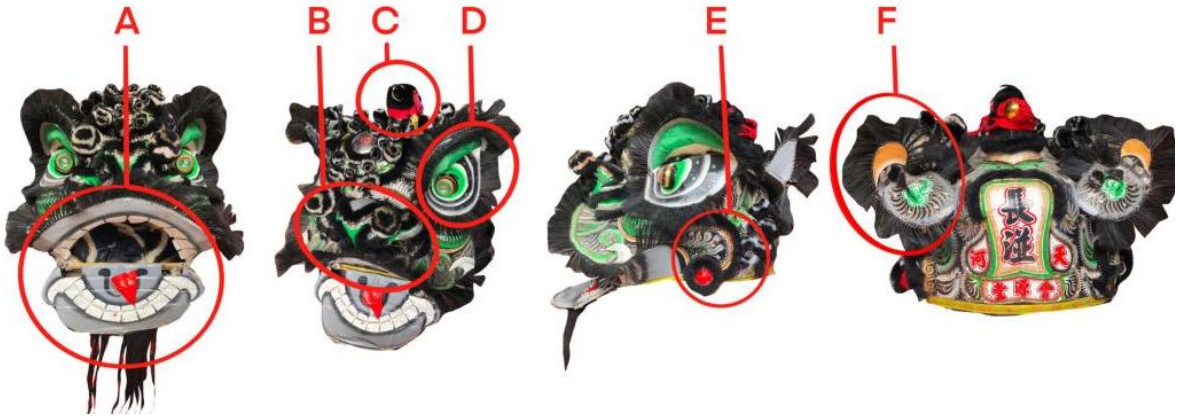


Figure 4.51: Schematic Diagram of Guangzhou Lion Head's Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

However, Foshan Lion Heads have also incorporated elements of Heshan Lion Heads. Thus, it can be seen from Figure 4.52 that the design of the circular cheek (marked as A) is the same as that of Heshan Lion Heads. The lion nose shown in B looks more like the nose of a Foshan Lion Head, and the lion mouth shown in C, with its upturned upper lip, originates from Foshan Lion Heads, while the painted teeth and tongue originate from Heshan Lion Heads. The visual symbols of Heshan Lion Heads will be analysed in detail in the corresponding chapter, so the shape of Heshan Lion Heads is not discussed in detail here. It can be seen that the Guangzhou Lion Head not only absorbs the essence of traditional Foshan Lion Heads but also incorporates other design elements.

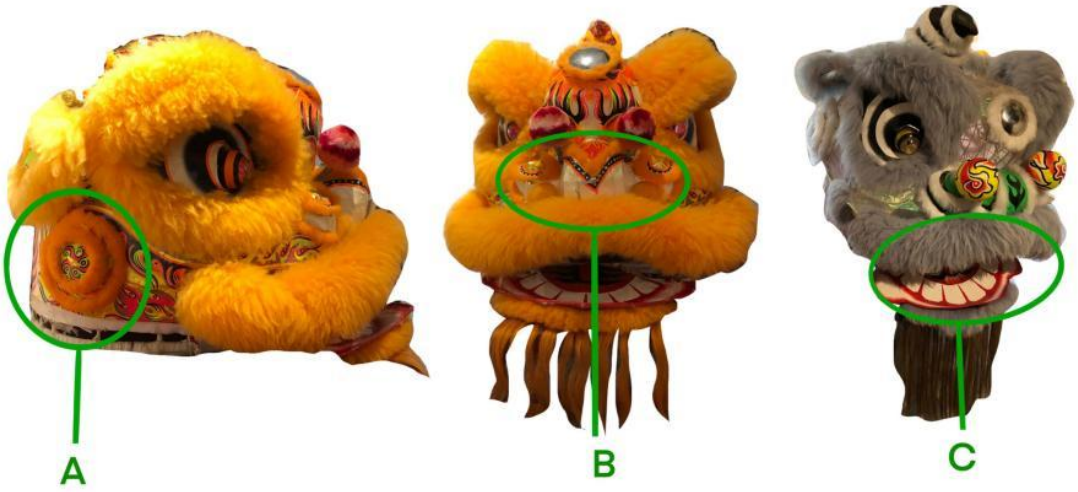


Figure 4.52: Display of Guangzhou Lion Head (Non-Heritage Master "Lion Dance" Zhao Weibin Studio, by Zhan, 2023)

ii. Colour

In the interviews conducted in Guangzhou, the use of colours is almost the same as in Foshan, except for a significant difference in the perception and attitude towards black, which is still similar to the ancestral temple culture mentioned above.

Ancestral temple culture records the history and traditions of a family. With the advent of the new era, ancestral temple culture still maintains its function in traditional society. For example, Liede Village in Guangzhou has a history of over 900 years. The village has formed 81 surnames since its establishment, each of which has its own ancestral hall. Clan members gather on Chinese traditional festivals, such as eating dragon boat rice on the Dragon Boat Festival and worshipping the Seven Fairies on the Qixi Festival. (Ning, et al., 2022) Interviewees E and F stated that many villages in Guangzhou like to perform lion dances on festive days such as housewarming, opening, and Lunar New Year.

This is a tradition in Guangzhou villages. Unlike Foshan, many villages in Guangzhou like to perform the Zhang Fei lion and Guan Gong lion dances. Both of these lion heads are themed with black. They believe that black represents majesty and can ward off evil. In addition, in the Yin-Yang and Five Elements theory mentioned above, black represents water. In Chinese folk culture, water means wealth, symbolizing riches and honor. However, in visual perception, black represents darkness and stability, which is hard to associate with “festivity” and “wealth”. It can be seen that from a semiotic perspective, the meaning symbolized by colour is closely related to the cultural background of the audience. Foshan and Guangzhou are two neighboring cities in the Lingnan region, and the traditions of the villages still differ, and these similarities and differences are intuitively reflected in the intangible cultural heritage of the region.

iii. Pattern and Decoration

The design of patterns and decorations on Guangzhou Lion Heads does not differ from Foshan. The illustration in figure 4.53 shows a lion head made by a famous inheritor in Guangzhou, where Tang floral motifs, Beaded Patterns, Water Patterns, and decorative items like tassels, fur, and flower baskets appear, identical to the Foshan Lion Heads.



Figure 4.53: Guangzhou Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

4.3.4.3 Analysis and Summary of Factors Affecting the Visual Symbol in Guanghzou Lion Head

It can be argued that the visual elements of Guangzhou Lion Heads are almost exact replicas of those from Foshan, and thus their corresponding visual symbols are similar. Figure 4.54 presents an analysis of the factors influencing the formation of visual symbols in Guangzhou Lion Heads. The light gray sections indicate factors that are consistent with those in Foshan, suggesting no substantial differences. The green sections represent modifiable factors and potential areas for development, which are also similar to Foshan. The pink-highlighted sections denote local customs (such as ancestral hall culture) that share similarities with but are not identical to those in Foshan, and these factors also

fall into the category of immutable elements. The yellow sections indicate influences brought about by the Heshan-style lion heads.

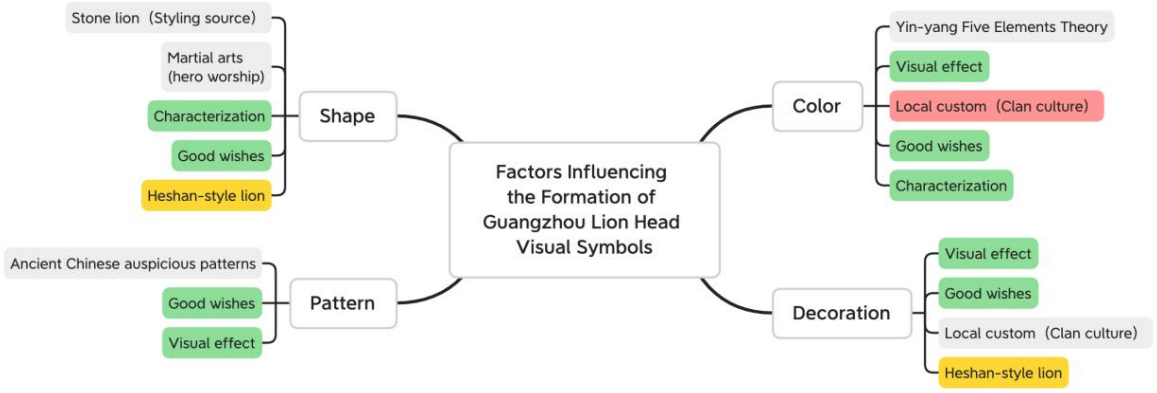


Figure 4.54: Factors Influencing the Visual Symbols of Guangzhou Lion Head (by Zhan)

While Guangzhou Lion Heads are highly similar to those of Foshan, they still reflect distinctive regional cultural characteristics. Guangzhou, being a historically inclusive and commercial hub, has lion head artisans who are more receptive to customer feedback and preferences. Consequently, when the Heshan-style lion heads gained popularity, artisans in Guangzhou readily adopted and integrated its strengths. As a result, many lion dance troupes in Guangzhou use Heshan-style lion heads. In contrast, Foshan artisans tend to adhere more strictly to traditional designs, reinforcing these traditions to establish a distinctive cultural identity unique to Foshan.

Despite the visual similarities between Guangzhou and Foshan Lion Heads, the cultural nuances and regional distinctions remain significant. Guangzhou's historical role as a commercial metropolis has cultivated a spirit of openness and adaptability among its artisans, who are inclined to incorporate client preferences and emerging trends. This

flexibility contrasts with the cultural conservatism in Foshan, where there is a stronger emphasis on preserving and enhancing traditional elements to maintain and promote Foshan's cultural heritage.

4.3.5 Visual Symbol Analysis of Heshan Lion Head

Tracing back the history of Heshan Lion Heads, they still originate from Foshan Lion Heads, but their visual elements show significant differences. Despite the fame of Heshan-style lions overseas, there are very few records about Heshan Lion Heads. Jie (2006) described the external shape of the Heshan Lion Head: raised eyes, drooping eyebrows, and mouth shaped like a duck's bill or a frog's mouth. Liang (2010) provided a more abstract description: 'Heshan-style, painted shape, avian type, and leopard cub.' Interviewee J stated that Heshan Lion Head was included in the county-level Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2017, its history can be traced back to the reign of Emperor Guangxu during the Qing Dynasty. The Heshan lion dance art originates from the Foshan lion dance art, with its founder Feng Gengzhang studying lion dancing from Feng Liao, researching diligently on Foshan lion dancing, and on this basis, creating the Heshan lion dance art that excels in 'lion-like cat steps, high difficulty in blue picking, and seven-star drumming'. Due to his solid performance skills and unique dance steps, Feng Gengzhang was named 'Lion King of Guangdong'. Because of their unique dance steps, Feng Gengzhang and Chen Dou altered the design of the Foshan Lion Head, creating the Heshan-style lion.

The Heshan lion dance features light steps and unique lion head design, both of which have been spread overseas. The lion dance in Malaysia shone brightly in international competitions, their lion dance skills and lion head making skills have

developed in Malaysia (Ying and Chiat, 2016). Today, due to the outstanding lion head making and lion dance performances in Malaysia, Xiao Feihong, known as the ’Lion King of Malaysia,’ has superior lion dance skills and is the sixth-generation disciple of Feng Gengzhang, the founder of Heshan lion in China. In 1986, he founded the Wansheng Long Lion Art Production Workshop in Malaysia, where his lion head production craft is superior, aesthetically pleasing, and innovative, receiving wide acclaim. Therefore, lion heads produced in Malaysia are affectionately referred to as ’Malay Lions’ by the Chinese people (Tan, 2015), and these changes have provided feedback to the traditional Heshan Lion Heads. Once, the Heshan-style lion was a cultural export to Southeast Asian countries, and now the Malay Lion’ as an imported culture is influencing China’s lion dance art.

4.3.5.1 Overview and Analysis Framework of Visual Symbol in Heshan Lion Head

As previously stated, most of the visual elements of the Heshan Lion Head originate from the Foshan Lion Head. Therefore, the meanings of its shape, colour, patterns, and decorations are basically similar but not identical to those of the Foshan Lion Head. Overall, the visual elements of the Heshan Lion Head are simpler than those of the Foshan Lion Head, and they are also influenced by the lion art techniques in Malaysia, resulting in new attempts and developments of its visual elements. The comparison and analysis of images are the main research methods in this section. Figure 4.55 shows the analytical framework of the visual elements of the Heshan Lion Head. It is quite similar to the analysis of the Foshan Lion Head but also needs to incorporate the impact reflected by the Malaysia Lion head for comparison and analysis. This will provide readers with a deeper understanding of the visual symbols of the Heshan Lion Head mask.

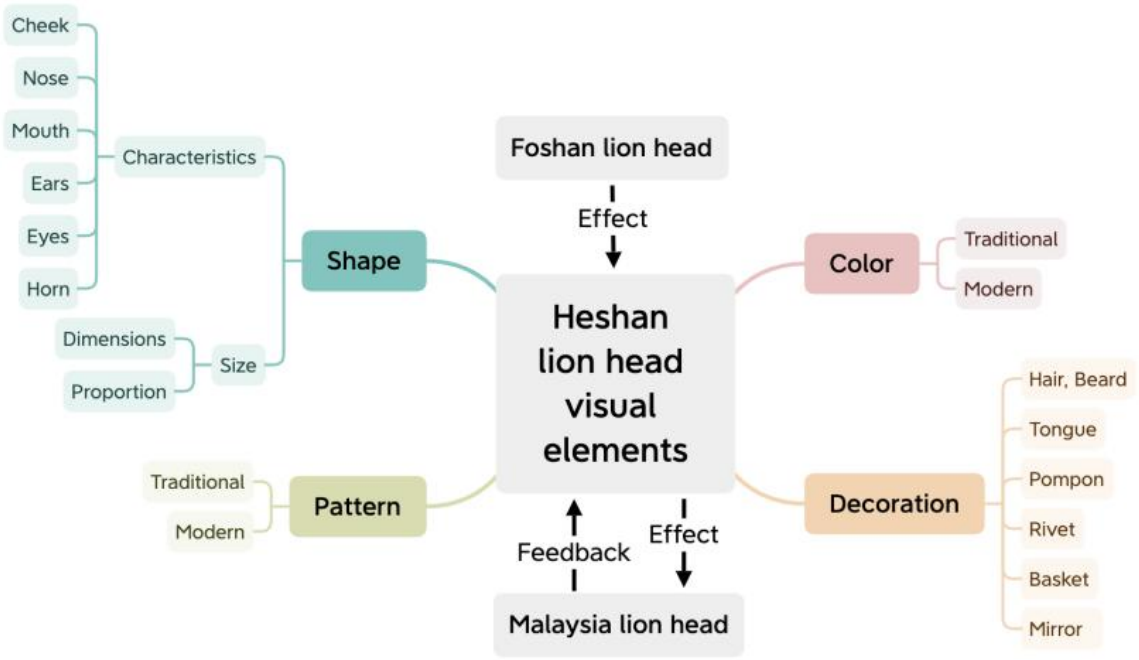


Figure 4.55: Analysis Framework of Heshan Lion Head's Visual Symbols (by Zhan)

4.3.5.2 Heshan Lion Head's Visual Elements Details and Symbols

i. Shape

The visual symbols of Heshan lion heads are closely related to those of Foshan lion heads. By comparing the shapes of lion heads from these two regions, one can gain a better understanding of the characteristics of their visual symbols. (Figure 4.56)

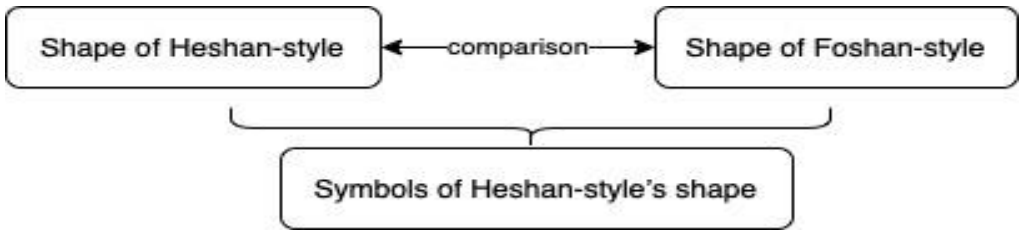


Figure 4.56: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Heshan Lion's Shape (by Zhan)

a) Size and Proportions

The distinction between the Heshan Lion Head and the Foshan Lion Head is not merely superficial but is underscored by considerable variations in size and proportion. The genesis of the Heshan Lion Head's design is intrinsically linked to its unique dance movements. As a result of these choreographic considerations, modifications and refinements have been made over time to ensure that the lion head is both functionally and aesthetically congruent with its dance steps. One salient outcome of this evolution is that the Heshan Lion Head, when compared to its Foshan counterpart, boasts a relatively lighter weight, making it more conducive for intricate dance performances. The meticulous measurements detailing its size, proportions, and other pertinent dimensions are comprehensively documented in table 4.5, providing a deeper understanding of its design intricacies.

Table 4.5: Model and Size of Heshan Lion Head Mask (The above data are provided by Feng Shengqiang, successor of Heshan Lion Head, 2023)

Model	Size (W x L x H) cm
No.1	66 × 98 × 75
No.2	60 × 88 × 68
No.3	55 × 80 × 62
No.4	48 × 70 × 55
No.5	42 × 62 × 48
No.6	36 × 53 × 41
No.7	30 × 44 × 34

Taking the white embryo of the No. 3 Heshan Lion Head as an example for proportion analysis (Figure 4.57). The white embryo display clearly shows its proportion

and shape characteristics. It can be seen that the length, width, and height ratio of this model lion head is approximately 1: 0.69: 0.78. It is narrow and long, so from the front, the cheek part of the Heshan Lion Head seems not full enough. The setting of the length, width, and height ratio of the Heshan Lion Head mask not only considers the appearance but also the requirements of its dance steps. It is said that the best angle to view traditional Heshan Lion dance is 45 degrees from the front side and the front side needs to hang down 45 degrees. The design of the lion head mask has a great relationship with the steps of the Heshan lion dance. Interviewee K stated that in the step design of the Heshan Lion dance, the lion dance performer holding the lion head needs to hang down 45 degrees, look left and right to show the emotional expression of “surprise” and “doubt” of the “cat-type lion”.

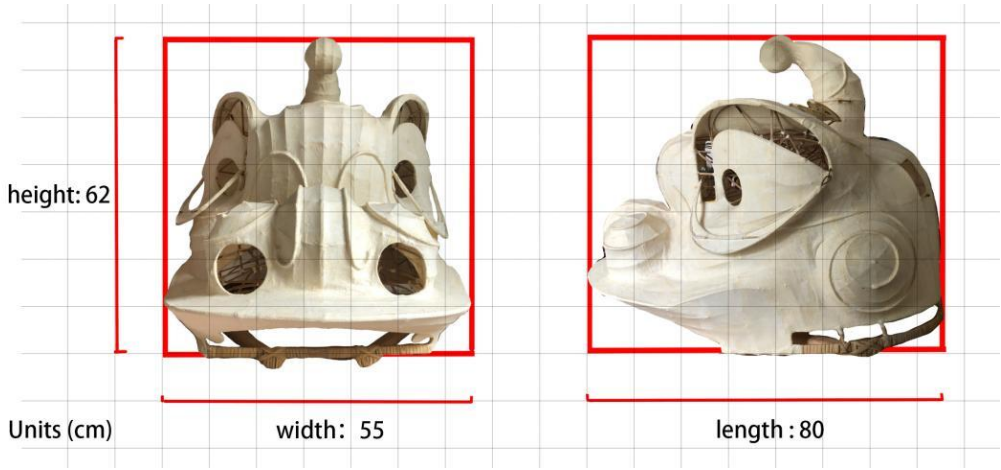


Figure 4.57: Schematic Diagram of The Length, Width, and Height Ratio of The Heshan Lion Head (No.3 Style)(by Zhan, 2023)

Compared to the robustness of the Foshan lion’s head, the outline of the Heshan lion’s head incorporates more curved lines. Li (2022) pointed out that the dance style of the Heshan lion mimics feline creatures, exhibiting a gentle, rounded, and endearing

appearance. Throughout the interview process, interviewees consistently expressed the Heshan people's philosophy of "valuing harmony" with a humble attitude. Evidently, there is a close relationship between the design of the Heshan lion's head shape and these aforementioned characteristics.

b) Lion's Cheeks

The cheeks of traditional Foshan Lion Head masks are dual-cheek structures, while Heshan Lion Heads have always used a simpler round cheek structure. As the name implies, round cheeks are round, shaped like half a sphere, with a simple shape, and slightly cute.

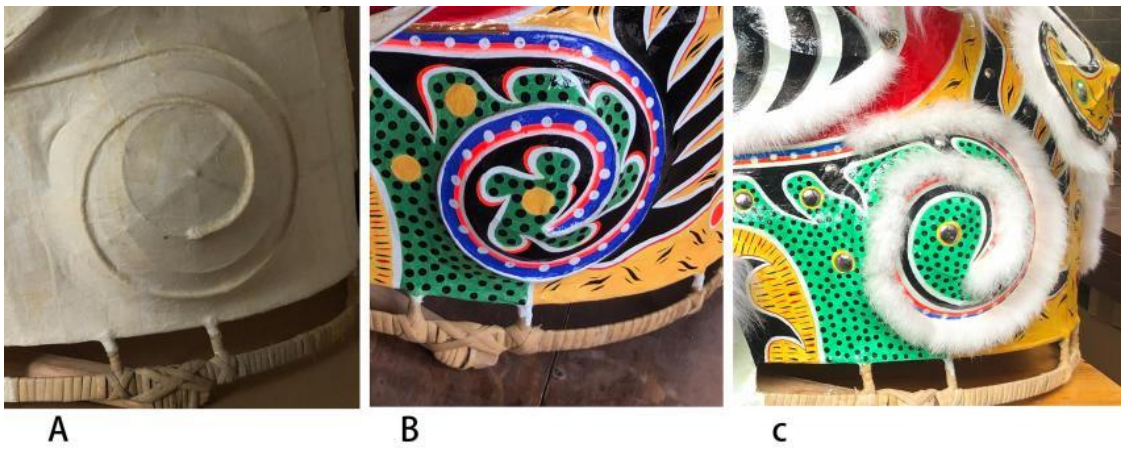


Figure 4.58: Heshan Lion Head - Round Cheek Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

Figure 4.58A shows the white embryo structure of round cheeks. If the dual-cheek structure of the Foshan Lion Head makes the lion head's details more abundant and creates a sense of "smile", then the Heshan Lion Head is a redesign of its cheek structure. The simple shape makes the side face lines of the lion head smooth; B shows the coloured round cheeks, and the pattern design based on the shape makes it not seem simple; the

decorated round cheeks are like C. The round cheek design has had a significant impact on the shapes of lion head masks in various regions of Guangdong. According to field investigation information, Guangzhou Lion Heads, Suixi Lion Heads, and even some Foshan Lion Heads, will all make Foshan Lion Heads with round cheek design. There are three reasons: First, the Heshan Lion Head making process is relatively simple and easy to imitate; Second, modern people prefer simple designs, and round cheeks are more in line with their aesthetics; Third, compared to the traditional lion's dual cheeks, the round cheek structure is simple, with fewer decorations, which can reduce the weight of the lion head mask and facilitate the performance of the lion dance performers.

c) Lion's Nose

The noses of Heshan and Foshan Lion Head masks both resemble a large garlic bulb, but the nose of the Heshan lion occupies a larger area of the entire lion head, thereby giving the lion head a sense of clumsiness.

Figures 4.59 A and B respectively show the front view of the noses of the Heshan and Foshan lions, both of which are large noses and occupy the center of the entire lion head, being the visual center of the entire lion head. Drewing a gray proportion box for the lion head masks, and then drew a blue line in the middle to divide the mask into two equal parts. As seen in Figures A and C, the nose is in the lower half of the lion head, occupies a larger area, and the red line is the contour line of the nose, with smooth lines without any obvious abruptness; in B and D, the nose is in the center of the lion head, with a distinct nose contour, and in D, the nose obviously has an upward trend. Therefore, the nose of the

Heshan lion is slightly larger and clumsier than that of the Foshan lion, and is somewhat cute.

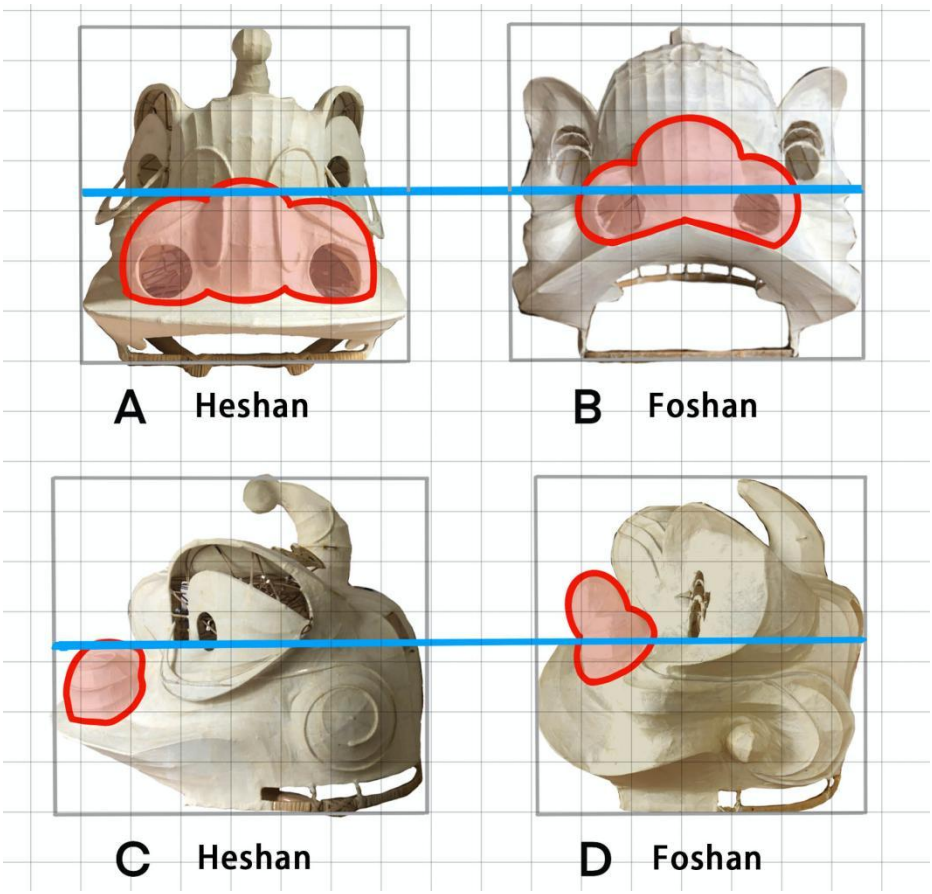


Figure 4.59: Comparison of Heshan and Foshan Lion's Nose Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

Southern lions are known for being "mighty" and "courageous", while the characteristics of Heshan lions are power without being ostentatious, reflecting the qualities of "cleverness and cuteness" and "valuing harmony" everywhere.

d) Lion's Mouth

The mouth of the Heshan Lion Head is called a "duck bill" or "frog mouth" because of its flat and wide shape. Like the lion nose analysis diagram, a contour box is

established and an upper and lower boundary line is drawn to give readers an intuitive feeling of the size of the lion's mouth in the mask. In Figure 4.60A, the flat and wide lion mouth shows the gentleness and cuteness of the Heshan lion, B shows the wide-open mouth of the Foshan lion, the upper lip is upturned into an arched shape with corners, and the area of the mouth alone almost occupies the lower half of the mask, appearing fierce and sharp. Looking from the side, C and D show that the corners of the lion's mouth are upturned, with a smiling expression. It can be seen that although the Heshan Lion Head has not small differences from the Foshan Lion Head in terms of shape, their similarities can also be found.

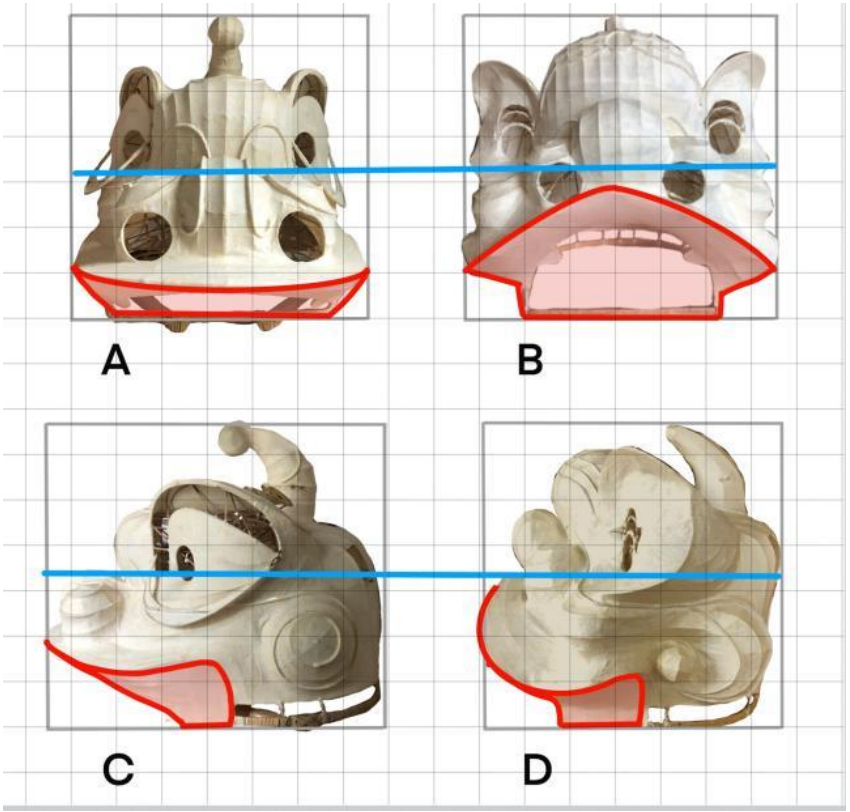


Figure 4.60: Comparison of Heshan and Foshan Lion's Mouth Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

e) Lion’s Ears

The design of the lion's ears plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall aesthetic and identity of the lion head mask. When considering the Heshan Lion Head, the design philosophy primarily leans towards embodying traits of cuteness and cleverness. As such, every detail, including the design of its ears, is meticulously crafted and adjusted to resonate with this overarching theme, ensuring a harmonious and cohesive visual representation.



Figure 4.61: Comparison of Heshan and Foshan Lion’s Ear Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

The A series in Figure 4.61 are the ears of the Heshan Lion Head. The outlines of the ear shape are mainly curved. They are installed on both sides of the back of the lion’s head, and the ears are slightly tucked in towards the lion’s cheeks, looking cute and gentle; The B series are the ears of the Foshan Lion Head. The lines are slightly straight and there

are small wing decorations. They stand upright and spread out on both sides of the back of the lion's head, looking majestic and awe-inspiring.

f) Lion's Eyes

The Heshan lion and the Foshan Lion Head exhibit distinct differences when it comes to the design and appearance of their eyes. While both lion heads represent unique artistic interpretations, the shape, detailing, and overall aura exuded by their eyes vary significantly, with each offering a different sense of character and momentum.

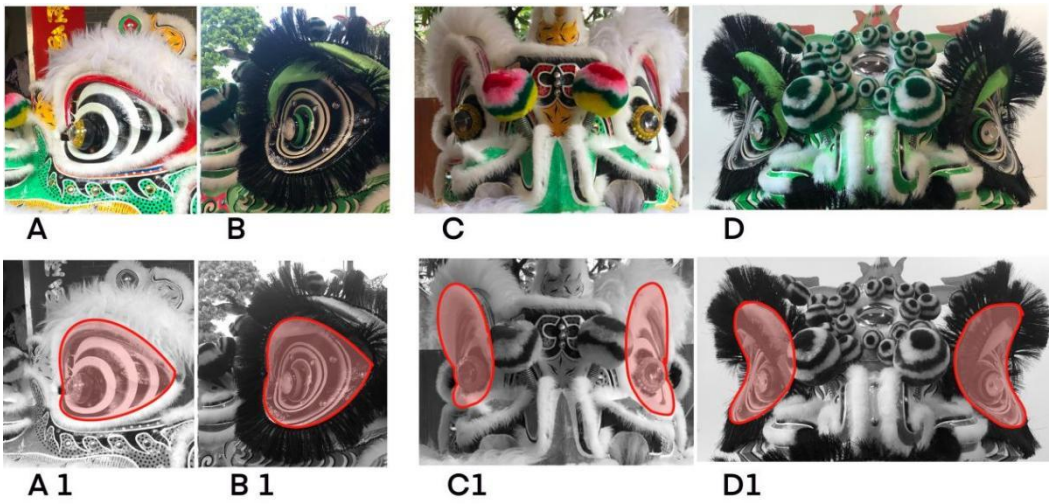


Figure 4.62: Comparison of Heshan and Foshan Lion's Eye Shape (by Zhan, 2023)

The pictures in the B and D series of Figure 4.62 show the side and front eye shapes of the Foshan Lion Head. The eyes of the Foshan Lion Head have been detailed above and can be summarized as eyes like copper bells, with incense towers on top, and reflective sequins in the eyes that look spirited. The A and C series are schematic diagrams of the eyes of the Heshan Lion Head. Compared with B1, the eyes of A1 are wider, and the eyes of C1 are flatter, which is consistent with the "upright eyes" shown in the data. There

are also simple incense towers on the top of the eyes, and no reflective sequins are installed in the eyes.

g) Lion Horns

The explanation for the fist horn was given when introducing a series of structural designs of the Foshan Lion Head. If so, the “fist” horn symbolizes power is its general saying. Interviewee J said that the design of the fist horn should have originated from Heshan. The traditional Heshan Lion Head only has the design of the fist horn. Heshan’s folk customs are simple, and everyone believes in harmonious coexistence and values peace, and does not like designs that are too aggressive, so the fist horn is a spherical horn at the top of the horn, without any aggressiveness. As shown in Figure 4.63, B shows the fist horn decorated with white rabbit fur, which does not seem to have any aggressiveness at all.

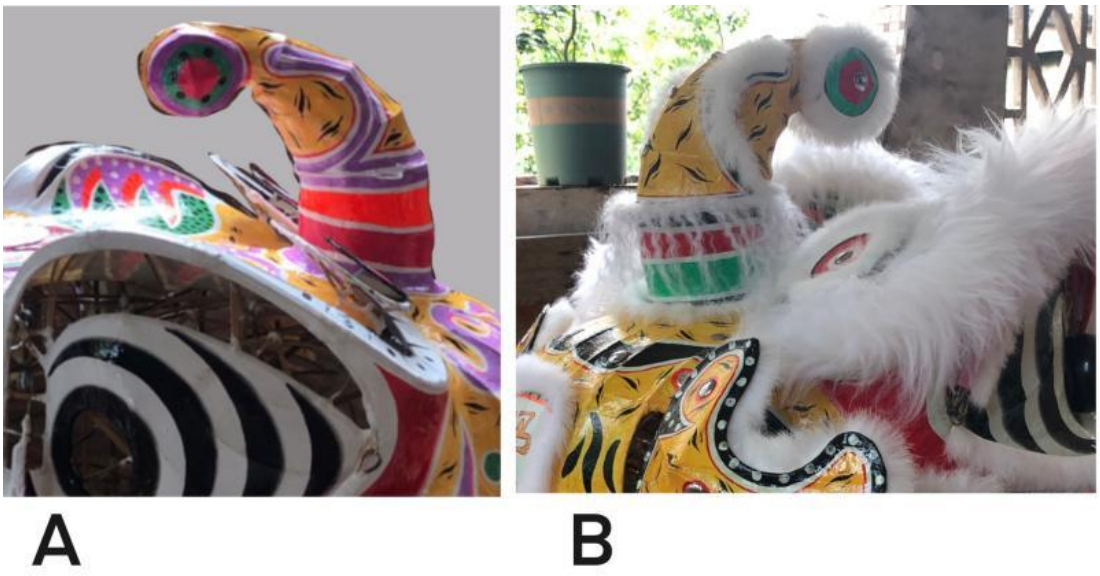


Figure 4.63: Heshan Lion Head - Fist Horn (by Zhan, 2023)

The northern lion is more similar to a real lion in terms of shape, and there are no horns on its head. While the horns of the southern lion have their symbolic significance, they are more often a demonstration of its heroic momentum. Although the Heshan lion appears cute and clever, it does not remove the characteristics of the southern lion because of this, so the fist horn with a spherical design not only shows the momentum of the southern lion, but also shows the kindness of the Lingnan region. The design of the fist horn has now been referenced and imitated by lion dance in various regions of Guangdong.

ii. Colour

The colours of Heshan lion heads are closely linked to the lifestyle and attitudes of the local people. The concept of "seven colors" represents their understanding of happiness, and this auspicious wish is vividly reflected in the color scheme of Heshan lion heads. (Figure 4.64)

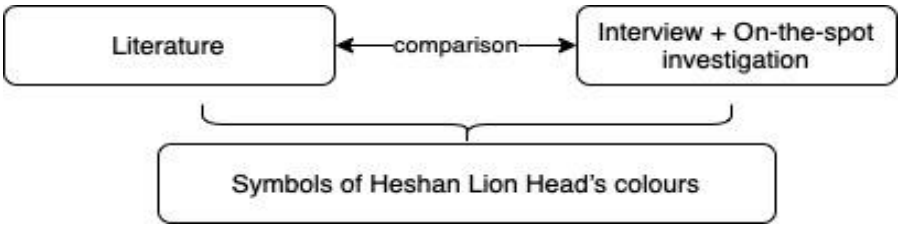


Figure 4.64 Symbolic Analysis Digram of Heshan Lion's Colours (by Zhan)

The "Seven-coloured Lion" is another name for the Heshan lion. As the name suggests, the colour scheme of the Heshan Lion Head is "seven-coloured". Traditional Heshan only has "Liu, Guan, and Zhang" as characters. However, the Seven-coloured Lion is the most recognized, so Heshan lions related to Guan Yu and Zhang Fei characters are not common.



Figure 4.65: Heshan Seven-coloured Lion Head Mask (by Zhan, 2023)

According to the survey results, the term “seven-coloured” does not refer to seven colours, but rather to a multitude of colours. It means colourful, but not necessarily only seven colours, or perhaps not seven colours at all. As shown in Figures 4.65 and 4.66, the colours on the lion’s head are very intuitive when no hair decorations are installed. Green, yellow, and red are the main colours of every seven-coloured lion. The two figures show two seven-coloured lion heads with different colour schemes. The extracted colours are almost identical, with only a slight difference in green. Occasionally, some yellow will be replaced by gold, and orange-red will be replaced by fluorescent orange.



Figure 4.66: Heshan Seven-coloured Lion Head Mask (2) (by Zhan, 2023)

Interviewee J stated that all traditional Heshan Lion Heads have green noses, the reason for which is not recorded. However, there are several reasons for yellow as the base colour: one, yellow as the base, seven-colour spots are derived from the design of Liu Bei's lion image in Foshan Lion Head; two, the dance steps of Heshan lion are like a cat, tiger is a feline animal, fierce and agile, so tiger spots will appear on the yellow base, because yellow is also a colour on the tiger's body; three, yellow symbolizes "imperial power" and "wealth". This interpretation is consistent with the above, so yellow as the main colour of the seven-coloured lion has become the traditional colour rule of Heshan Lion Head.

The colour scheme of the lion head mask can be adjusted according to the customer's needs, but the lion head maker will still consider retaining traditional colours during creation. Figure 4.67 shows an innovative colour scheme for the Heshan Seven-

coloured Lion head. In this scheme, light purple occupies a large area, and besides that, the other colours still retain the most original “seven colours”.



Figure 4.67: Heshan Seven-coloured Lion Head Mask (3) (by Zhan, 2023)

Interviewees J and K both stated: Black and white in Heshan lion can only be used as auxiliary colours for decoration, and cannot be used in large areas. They believe that only seven colours can symbolize beauty, and large areas of black or white do not feel auspicious. In addition, Heshan lion does not have the design of the Five Tiger Generals, so although the Guan Gong lion and Zhang Fei lion symbolizing “wealth” and “loyalty” in Foshan and Guangzhou are popular and included in the design of Heshan Lion Head, they are not common. From this, it can be seen that the simple folk customs of Heshan people have a rather pure desire for a happy life.

iii. Pattern

In the introduction section of Foshan Lion Head patterns, the researcher has given a detailed interpretation of each pattern. However, although some of these patterns have been applied to traditional Heshan Lion Heads, their form of expression has been completely changed. (Figure 4.68)

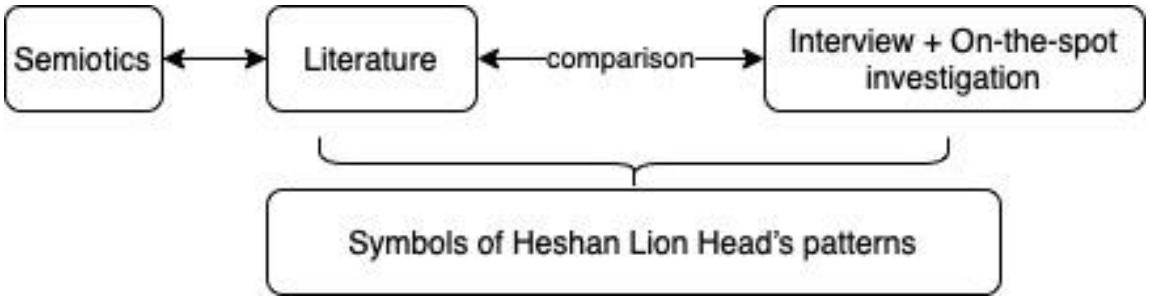


Figure 4.68 Symbolic Analysis Digram of Heshan Lion's Patterns (by Zhan)

In Figure 4.69A, the black dots on the large green area are called "hair follicle pattern". This pattern is not a traditional Chinese ancient pattern, but a pattern created by the inheritor based on his understanding of the external features of a "cat". The hair follicles of a hairy cat are generalized into circular shapes and are evenly distributed and painted on a large area of the lion head mask, forming the unique hair follicle pattern of the Heshan Lion Head. The elongated dot pattern framed in B is also called the cat whisker pattern by the master, which resembles short and stiff cat hairs. Both A and B are designed with a "similar in shape" logic. Both C and D are patterns based on Tang grass patterns, representing the lion's hair. The pattern shown in C is more similar to the Tang grass pattern on the Foshan Lion Head, while D shows a feather texture pattern, which is not a traditional Chinese culture. Although this pattern seems to be a Tang grass pattern, other patterns are adorned inside, making it almost impossible to see the C-shape or S-shape

features of the Tang grass pattern. Therefore, the mask maker refers to it as an innovative "feather pattern".



Figure 4.69: Traditional Heshan Lion Head Mask Patterns (by Zhan, 2023)

E shows a simplified bat pattern, and F shows a pattern of two bats connected together. The bat pattern is a traditional Chinese ancient pattern, the shape of which comes from the form of a bat spreading its wings. Roland. B. (1999) believes that in semiotics, a sign is composed of a signifier and a signified, but their essence can be different. Just like a bat, the real bat is not beautiful, and it is even regarded as the embodiment of "evil or dark forces" in the West. But in China, the word "bat" sounds the same as fortune (The Chinese name for the bat is "bian fu", "fu" means happiness), and the happy implication indicated by the bat pattern has more than 60 types, including the typical "five fortunes holding longevity" (Figure 4.60 left), full fortune and longevity, luck shining bright, etc., these

words all have the pronunciation of the word “fortune” in Chinese, and are recognized as a symbol of happiness (Zhang, 2009). The right figure in Figure **4.70** is the outline drawing of the bat pattern that appears in Chinese ceramics, New Year’s pictures, woodware, etc. It can be seen from it that there are simple and complex patterns of “bat”, with various styles. However, the bat pattern has a unified feature, that is, the pattern is based on a bat with “wings spread out” as the main material. As can be seen, although the pattern shown on Figure4.69E is a simple black silhouette, it also shows the main features of the bat pattern. The parallel connected bat pattern in Figure **4.69**F symbolizes “double fortune”.



Figure 4.70: Bat Patterns. LeTraditional Heshan Lion Head Mask Patternseng, Blue-and-white Five Blessings Hold Longevity Plate, Tie (2005); Chaohua Publishing House, P85; Right: Shen (1981)

Figure 4.69G shows the pattern of a spiky flower path on the “Tower Incense” of the lion’s head mask. According to the interviewee J, this is the pattern of the lotus pod path. A similar pattern to this is the “entwined lotus pattern”. The entwined lotus pattern is

one of the most classic decorations in Chinese ceramics culture. It is a pattern in which lotus flowers are entwined with vines (Jiao, 2018). As shown in Figure 4.71, A, B, C respectively show three styles of entwined lotus pattern from two periods, which symbolized “the royal family continues for generations” in the eyes of ancient Chinese emperors (Yu, 2006). However, the lotus pod path displayed on the Heshan Lion Head is spiky and expressed in black, which is quite different from the elegant entwined lotus pattern. It can be seen that when artisans paint patterns on lion head masks, they still consider the strong character of the “lion” and then create.

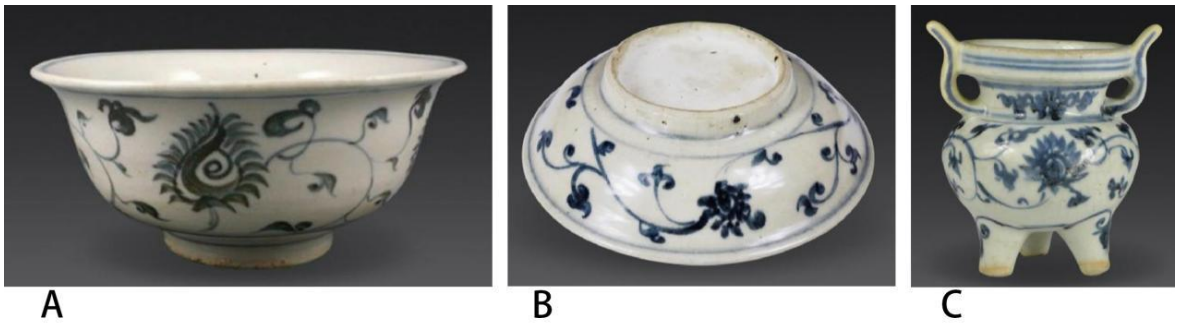


Figure 4.71: Entwined Lotus Patterns. A: Yongle Blue-and-white Entwined Lotus Bowl; B: Xuande Blue-and-white Entwined Lotus Plate; C: Xuande Blue-and-white Entwined Lotus Tripod Incense Burner (Jiao, 2018)

In the process of creating patterns, artisans will design patterns based on their understanding of the object of creation. 4.69H shows the black tiger stripe pattern, which aligns with the initial intention of the design of Heshan lion dance “lion shape and cat steps” and the colourful background dots are the positions reserved by the artisan for rivet decoration, which are the base colour of the decoration.



Figure 4.72: Tiger Patterns. A: Rubbing of Tiger Pattern Roof Tile; B: Warring States Tiger Pattern Bronze Ge; C: Photo of Tiger Fur (Baidu Scholar, 2022)

From Figures 4.72A and B, it can be seen that the tiger stripe pattern on the Heshan lion's head mask is not the "Tiger Pattern" of traditional Chinese patterns. As an art symbol, the tiger pattern can be used alone or combined with other elements. Different usage scenarios will change its symbolic meaning. However, the tiger stripe pattern shown in Figure 4.59H is similar to the real tiger stripe pattern shown in Figure 4.72C, suggesting that the design intention of the tiger stripe pattern on the Heshan lion's head is simply a visually similar tiger stripe pattern.

Figure 4.69I shows the fish pattern. Its shape is similar to the traditional fish pattern shown in Figure 4.73. The fish patterns in China's Yangshao Banpo culture have different interpretations in different periods. However, regardless of the type of fish pattern, it is not simply an aesthetic object or a pure visual representation, but a product of spiritual power (Wang, 2023). This is quite different from the commonly understood meaning of "like a fish in water" today.

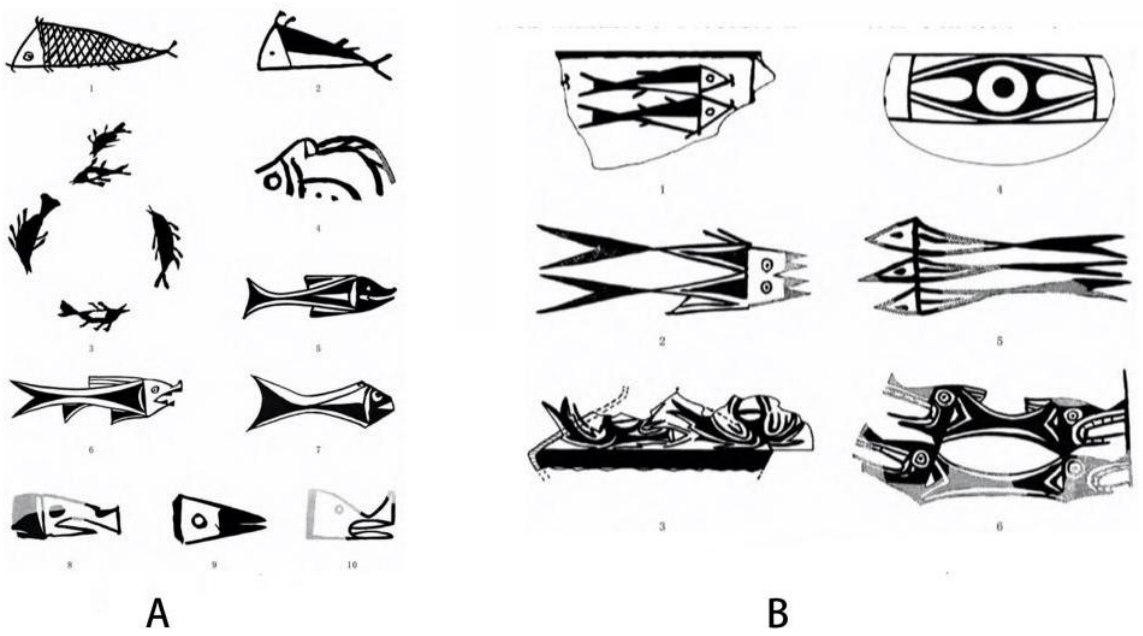


Figure 4.73: Fish Pattern. A: Single Fish Pattern in the Early Stage of Banpo Type; B: Combined Fish Pattern of Banpo Type (Wang, 2023)

Figure 4.74A shows a Heshan lion's head mask that incorporates the features of Guangzhou lion's head. Interviewee J stated that the white embryo shape of this lion's head mask was made by him, while the pattern was drawn by an artisan from Guangzhou. The pattern of traditional Heshan costume lion's head is bold and bold, while the Buddha costume lion is delicate and dynamic. The picture below shows the attempt to combine the Heshan lion's head shape with the Buddha costume lion's pattern. Figures B, C, D show the tang grass pattern, F, G express the Water Pattern, H is the Beaded Pattern, and the expression techniques are no different from the traditional Foshan lion. E is the "pore pattern" unique to the traditional Heshan-style lion, and I is a common decorative pattern. It can be seen that new visual forms of work will be produced in close cultural exchanges

between the two places, which raises another question: Will the accuracy of traditional culture tend to blur and lose the characteristics of local culture?

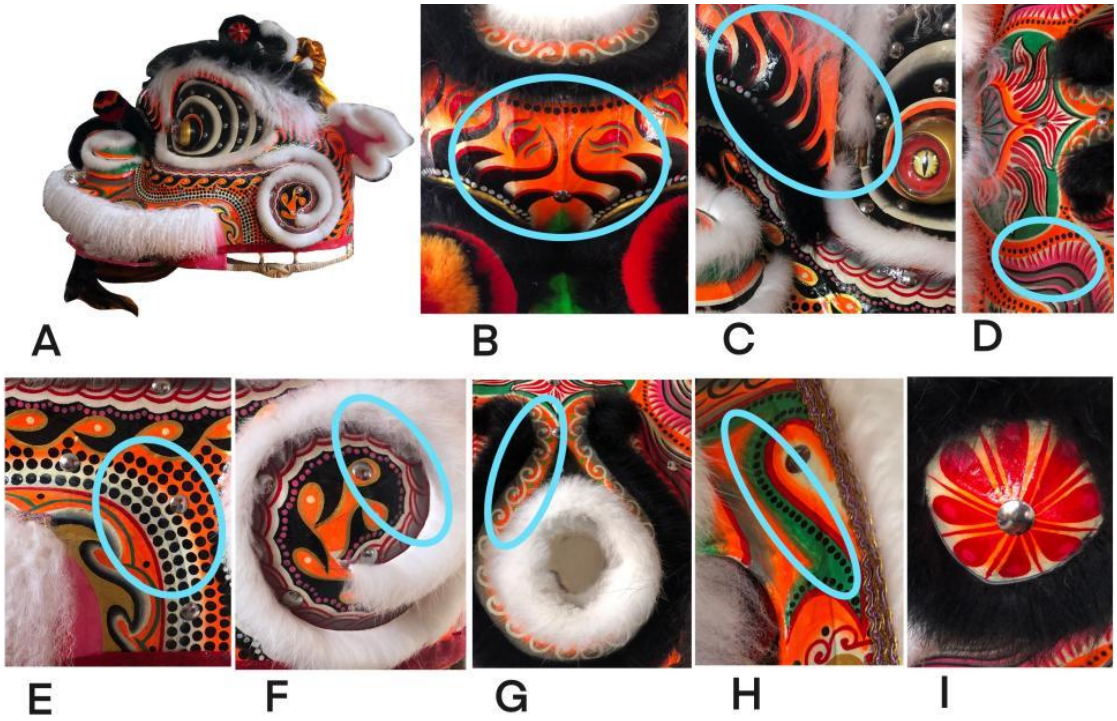


Figure 4.74: Patterns of Heshan Lion Mask Incorporating the Features of Guangzhou's (by Zhan, 2023)

During the field investigation, I found that the patterns on Heshan Lion Heads still have exploratory combinations: "Combination of text and image decorations". In Figure 4.75B, the circled text is "忠" , it means "loyalty"; C is the two sentences, "Red hare and green dragon are also helpful, rushing through the barriers and beheading the generals are the true heroes"; D is the traditional Chinese character for "righteousness"; E are "仁", "勇", mean "benevolence" and "bravery". In the Chinese pattern system, text is an important part, originating from pictographs and converging to meanings. Auspicious

texts have both the attributes of patterns and text, reflecting both artistic and aesthetic value, as well as expressing people's longing for a good life. (Zheng, 2020) The meaning conveyed by the text is more direct than the pattern, and the literal meaning is the conveyed connotation. However, undesignated text can appear rigid in design. Therefore, when Han characters are processed into images, the information of the text is combined with the image and continuously optimized, becoming a profound and visually effective symbolic language. In the following figure B, the Chinese character "loyalty" is processed through imagery. Its outline is shaped by a circular character frame. After the Chinese character is enhanced by the image, the audience will have a cognition and association with this graphic. C, D, E present the Chinese characters themselves, only conveying their literal meanings, but lacking exploration of their visual symbols. I believe this part of the content can be further explored and extended. The pattern shown in F is very concrete, two crossed swords entwined with a ribbon, which matches the text content on this lion head mask. However, if a concrete pattern has not been simplified and summarized to form a strong sense of order visual symbol, it will appear more like a drawing and lack symbolic meaning. Symbolic symbols point to more conceptual content and are represented through rules or conventions. However, if the content is too specific, it will easily become an "index", which weakens its deeper meaning. The pattern shown in Figure 4.75G is the previously mentioned "feather pattern", which also incorporates the traditional Heshan Lion pattern.

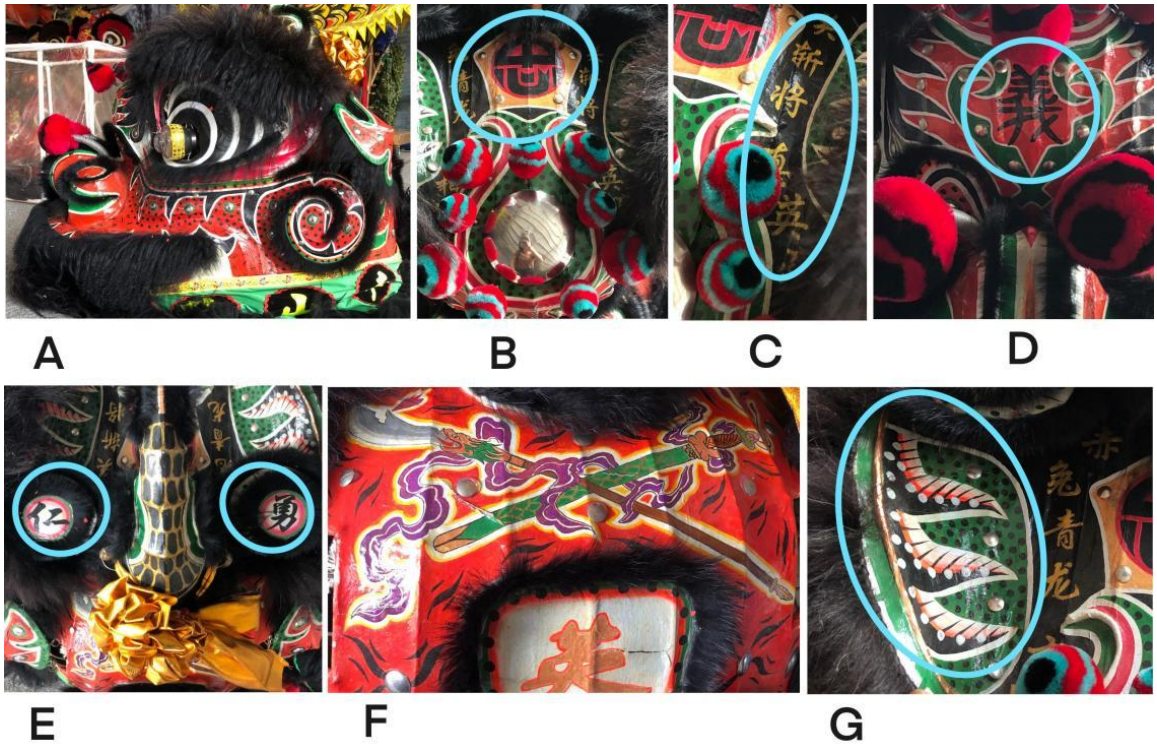


Figure 4.75: Combination of Text and Image Patterns on Heshan Lion Head Masks (by Zhan, 2023)

Most of the patterns on Heshan Lion Heads are “resembling” symbols, or “index”, while the patterns on Foshan Lion Heads are more like symbols in semiotics, not simple resembling indices. There is no hierarchy in the classification of visual symbols; icon, index, or symbol only represent the characteristics of its visual elements. Therefore, in terms of traditional Heshan-style lion patterns, they tend to favor what they represent, “Representation” expresses the direct physical contact and association with the object, without having to consider too much deep symbolic meaning and the cultural identity behind it. Because of this, it has innovative possibilities.



Figure 4.76: Patterns of Heshan-style Lion (Customized in Malaysia) (by Zhan, 2023)

Tan (2015) states that Malaysia Lion dancers have a high cultural recognition for China's lion dancing image, music, picking greens formation and other related lion dancing props. However, in this context, the lion artists in Malaysia are not satisfied with directly appropriating China's lion art, but instead made comprehensive improvements, including high-stack performances and the production process and innovative design of lion head masks. Malaysia Lion King Xiao (2021) believes that tradition and innovation should complement each other, and lion dance is no longer just China's culture, but the world's culture. Therefore, the lion head masks made by Master Xiao have undergone reform and development in this thought and cognition.

Figure 4.76 is a Heshan-style Lion Head customized at Wansheng Studio, which is bright in colour and not very different from the traditional Heshan-style Lion in shape. However, covering the entire lion head, aside from a few Tang grass patterns, the side, back, forehead, and top of the lion head are all decorated with innovative flame patterns. The flame pattern is an ancient traditional pattern in China, which has a significant connection with Buddhist culture. Ma and Zhong (2021) have conducted a detailed analysis of the evolution of fire patterns in Chinese Buddhism, stating that fire patterns symbolize sacred light, exorcism, and are also a symbol of Buddhist Dharma and some Dharma gods. Fire patterns can be seen around the Buddha statues on our ancient monument, Longmen Grottoes (Figure 4.77), which shows that fire patterns have a close connection with miracles, auspiciousness, and solemnity.

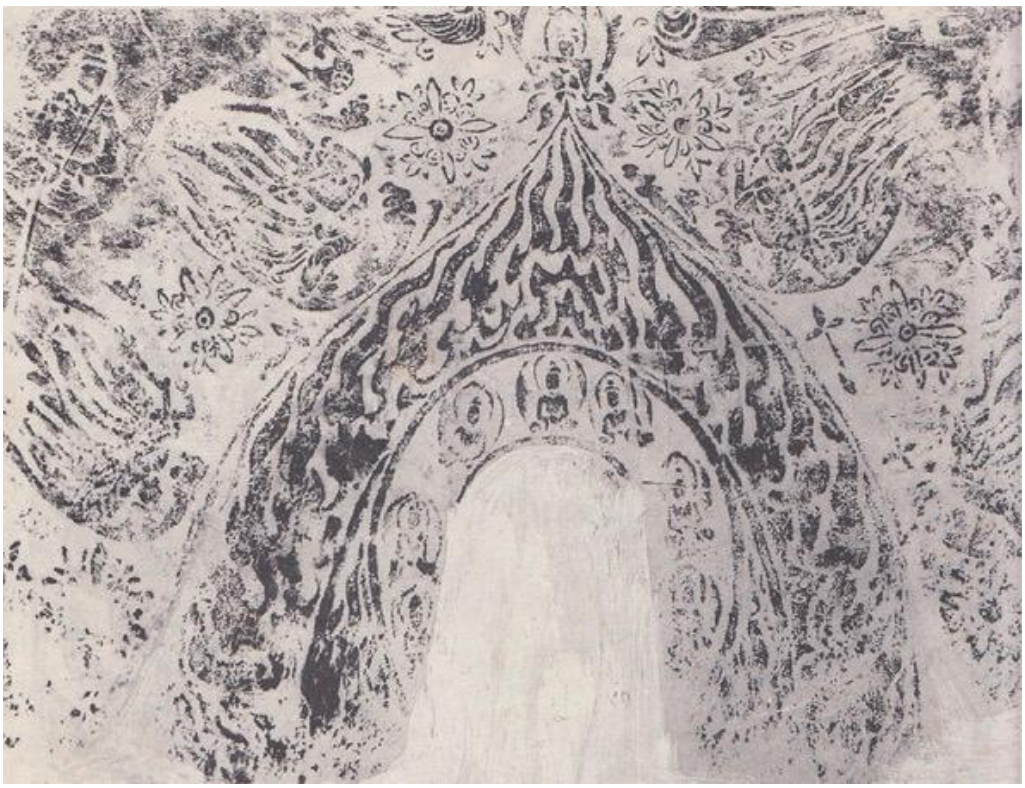


Figure 4.77: Gu Yang Cave Fire Pattern Backlight in Northern Wei (Decorative Carvings of Longmen Grottoes, Ma & Zhong , 2021)

From this, it can be seen that when Malaysian-made lion heads innovate in graphics, they also consider Chinese traditional culture, and they do not blindly copy the visual elements of traditional Heshan Lion Heads. The flame pattern in Figure 4.66A is made of reflective stickers; the flame pattern in C is made of gold reflective paper. The innovation of materials even changes the procedure of "tying, pasting, writing, embellishing" in the "writing" step, but this does not prevent this Malaysian-made Heshan-style Lion from being loved by lion artists around the world.

iv. Decoration

The decoration of Heshan lion heads is relatively minimalist and innovative, significantly influenced by Malaysian lion heads. This transformation has also sparked widespread imitation within China. (Figure 4.78)

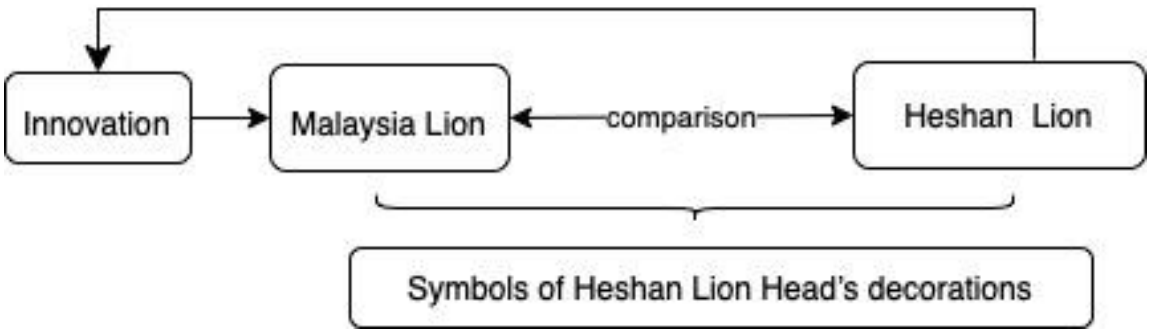


Figure 4.78: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Heshan Lion's Decorations (by Zhan)

a) Hair and Whiskers

According to interviewee J, the hair and whiskers of traditional Heshan Lion Heads are only in black and white, some lion heads only use white hair, some only use black hair,

and some use a mixture of black and white hair, but there are only a few choices (Figure 4.79). Unlike the hair of Foshan Lion Heads, the hair used to make Heshan Lion Heads is fluffy and soft wool, not hard horsehair. This design is mainly designed to match the cute and gentle image of Heshan lions. There is a strong relationship between the combination of hair and the shaping of its character.



Figure 4.79： Heshan Lion Head's Hair and Whiskers (by Zhan, 2023)

However, nowadays, due to the influence of the "Malaysia Lion" on the buyer's market, artisans in the Heishan region have also started to decorate with a variety of coloured synthetic fur. The Malaysian-made lion heads have caused a massive chain reaction to various visual elements of the Guangdong lion dance. The unorthodox design approach retains traditional Chinese visual elements and characteristics, while making design breakthroughs in every aspect. It is evident that the transmission and development of culture cannot be stagnant, only through communication and innovation can the "traditional culture" become more vibrant.

b) Lion's Tongue

Figure 4.80A shows the design of the tongue in the traditional Heshan Lion Head. Compared to Foshan's "Three-D tooth and vibrating tongue", the teeth and tongue of the Heshan Lion Head seem overly simple. As seen in the figure, both the lion's teeth and tongue are expressed in a painted form, and the way they are painted matches the simplicity of the patterns. B shows a three-dimensional tongue, but this style of tongue is also fixed. Interviewee J stated that this three-dimensional tongue is not the traditional method of the Heishan lion, the design concept originates from the three-dimensional tongue of the Foshan lion. However, the vibrating tongue may have some resistance during the dance, so painted tongues are generally used.



Figure 4.80： Heshan Lion Head's Tongue (by Zhan, 2023)

c) pompons

The traditional Foshan Lion Head is adorned with many pompons, decorated on the forehead, nose, eyes, ears, and cheeks. The traditional Heshan Lion Head retains the

pompon decoration, but only has two on the nose, connected with springs (Figure 4.81A). The style shown in B is not traditional, but an experimental version by the lion head maker. It is similar to the decoration of a row of pompons around the forehead mirror of the Foshan Lion Head, but no more pompons are installed in other positions on the lion head. However, because the location of the pompons in version B is close to that of the Foshan Lion Head, it weakens the clean and neat features of the Heshan Lion Head.

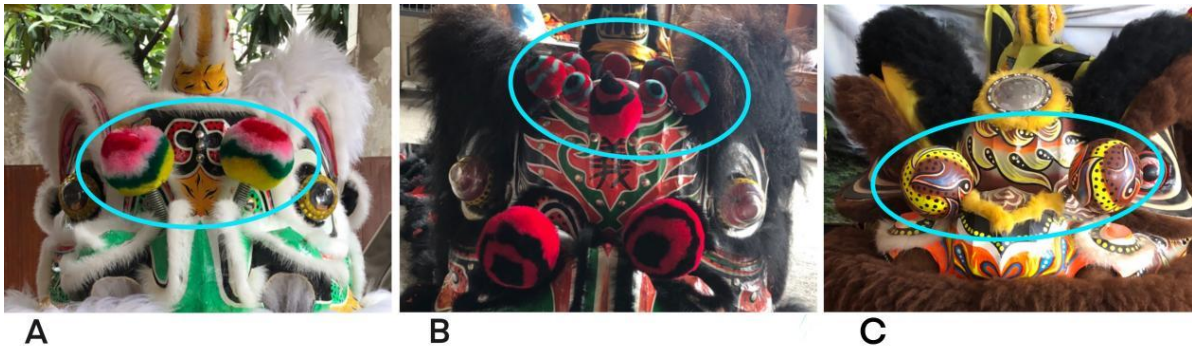


Figure 4.81： Heshan Lion Head's Pompons (by Zhan, 2023)

Figure 4.81C shows the creative Malaysia Lion style "pompon". In fact, this "pompon" is no longer the fluffy silk ball in the traditional sense, but a foam ball with patterned designs. The foam ball is cheap, light in material and waterproof, and it also allows for pattern painting on the ball. This further broadens the exploration of visual elements of lion dance heads. The diverse styles and functions of modern materials bring various possibilities for the development of handicrafts, and creators need to grasp the balance between "holding onto tradition" and "expanding the future".

d) Rivets, Forehead Mirror, Flower Basket

Heshan Lion Head masks will have a row of rivets the size of copper coins installed (Figure 4.82). According to interviewee J, this row of large reflective rivets represents copper coins. The rivet design on the eyes of the Foshan lion is to add liveliness to the lion dance, acting as an indicative symbol, while the rivets on the Heshan Lion Head are symbols of wealth. Looking closely at the details of the rivets, you can see that there is a circle of yellow, red, or green colour under each rivet, the colour visually amplifies the rivets. Since ancient times, copper coins have symbolized “wealth”, and the sparkling rivets allow the audience to associate this visual symbol with “wealth”. This aligns with the lion dance’s role as a mascot, therefore, this design has been in use up to this day.



Figure 4.82： Heshan Lion Head’s Rivets (by Zhan, 2023)

Equally employing reflective materials, the symbolic mirror on the forehead of the Heshan Lion Head does not share any visual symbol connection with the rivets. The mirror on the forehead of the Heshan Lion Head serves the same purpose as that on the Foshan Lion Head, symbolizing the warding off of evil spirits; there is also no significant

difference in the floral basket decorations of the two types of lion heads, so further elaboration is not necessary here.

4.3.5.3 Analysis and Summary of Factors Affecting the Visual Symbol in Heshan Lion Head

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the visual symbols of Heshan lion heads. Although many visual elements of Heshan lion heads are derived from Foshan lion heads, the creators have embarked on innovative explorations in both the choreography of the lion dance and the design of the props. As Heshan lion heads evolved, they underwent processes of cultural exportation and reintroduction, resulting in visual symbols that markedly differ from those of Foshan. Figure 4.83 illustrates the factors influencing the formation of visual symbols in Heshan lion heads: the light gray sections represent essential cultural markers that are immutable; the green sections indicate factors that can be modified and potential areas for future development; and the blue sections highlight the influence of Malaysian lion dance culture, signifying the potential for cultural exportation of Heshan lion heads.

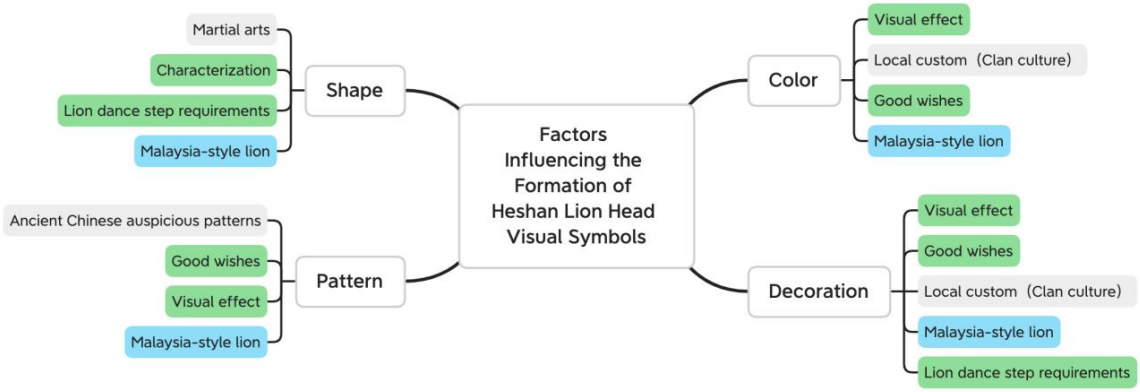


Figure 4.83： Factors Influencing Visual Symbols of Heshan Lion Head (by Zhan)

The rise and development of Heshan Lion Heads are not entirely the same as that of Foshan Lion Heads. The audience for today's Heshan Lion Heads is growing for four reasons: Fistly, its light and easy-to-dance design; Secondly, its minimalist design appeals to the aesthetics and preferences of contemporary young people; Thirdly, it complies with the prop standards of international dragon and lion dance competitions; Lastly, its visual elements have a lot of development potential.

The rise and development of Heshan lion heads differ significantly from those of Foshan. Currently, the audience for Heshan lion heads is expanding due to four primary reasons: Firstly, the lightweight design of Heshan lion heads facilitates ease of movement. This design not only reduces the physical exertion of performers but also enhances the agility and expressiveness of the lion dance, allowing for more complex maneuvers and actions to be showcased; Secondly, the minimalist design aligns with the aesthetic preferences of contemporary youth. Modern young people tend to favor designs that are simple yet aesthetically pleasing. Heshan lion heads, by simplifying intricate decorations and emphasizing core visual elements, cater to this trend; Thirdly, the design of Heshan lion heads complies with the regulations of international dragon and lion dance competitions. As dragon and lion dance sports gain popularity internationally, the design of Heshan lion heads not only focuses on aesthetics and functionality but also adheres strictly to international competition standards. This compliance provides Heshan lion heads with a competitive edge on the global stage; Fourthly, the visual elements of Heshan lion heads possess significant developmental potential. The designers continuously incorporate new elements and techniques, ensuring that Heshan lion heads retain traditional characteristics while also accommodating innovation. This openness and inclusivity not only enhance the

cultural value of Heshan lion heads but also facilitate their dissemination and acceptance worldwide.

In summary, the formation and development of visual symbols in Heshan lion heads follow a distinct trajectory compared to Foshan lion heads. Their lightweight design, minimalist aesthetic, compliance with international standards, and substantial developmental potential are key factors contributing to their success. These elements collectively constitute the unique cultural essence of Heshan lion heads and lay the foundation for their widespread dissemination and acceptance both domestically and internationally. Moving forward, Heshan lion heads are poised to further solidify their prominence within lion head culture through ongoing innovation and refinement.

4.3.6 Visual Symbol Analysis of Suixi Lion Head

The lion culture of Suixi started to spread during the Tang Dynasty. By the late Qing Dynasty, lion dance activities in Suixi were flourishing and had become integrated with other local folk activities (Zhang, 2020). Today, Suixi Lion Dance was officially listed in the traditional dance category of China's intangible cultural heritage in 2006, and Suixi Lion Heads were also included in the sixth batch of provincial intangible cultural heritage list of Guangdong Province in 2015. Both of these intangible heritage projects are based in the national intangible heritage Suixi Lion Dance Preservation and Inheritance Base, which integrates lion dance training, lion head making, and conservation areas. In this large Suixi Lion Head making workshop, the whole process of producing unique Suixi Lion Head masks can be observed.

The previous sections have detailed the visual symbols of Foshan, Guangzhou, and Heshan Lion Heads. The reason why Suixi Lion Heads are the last to be analysed is that

although the visual elements of Suixi Lion Heads originate from Foshan and Heshan, the development path of Suixi Lion Heads is not consistent with that of Guangzhou Lion Heads. It not only integrates both well, but also develops unique visual symbols for Suixi.

4.3.6.1 Overview and Analysis Framework of Visual Symbol in Suixi Lion Head

Figure 4.84 shows the analysis framework for visual elements of Suixi Lion Heads. It can be seen that Suixi Lion Heads have drawn from the essence of Foshan and Heshan Lion Heads, collected market feedback, integrated local culture, and ultimately developed the unique characteristics of Suixi Lion Heads. The streamlined production process has simplified its appearance. The simplification of the form cannot be interpreted as the loss of culture, as it reflects its development trend. To enable the art of lion head making to be passed down, it needs to be flexible and more dynamic.

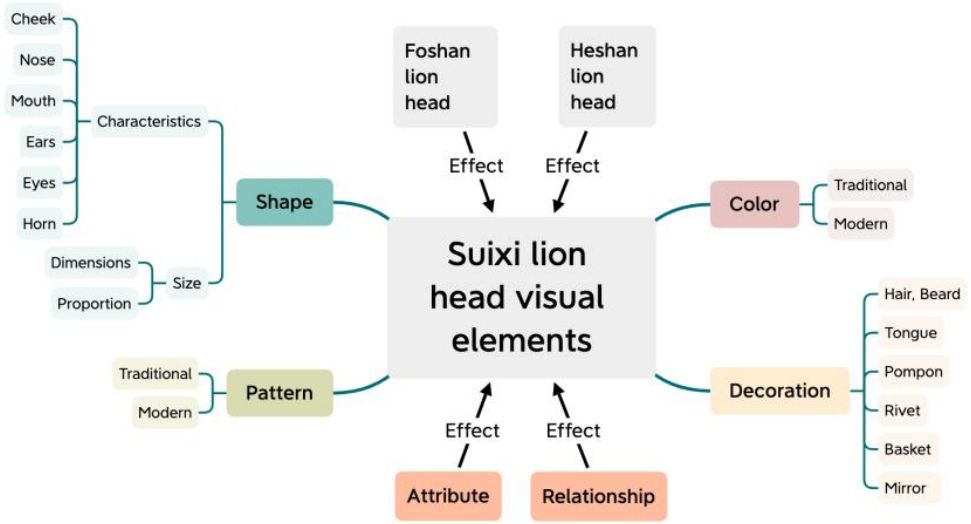


Figure 4.84： Analysis Framework of Suixi Lion Head's Visual Symbols

As shown in the figure above, the analysis of the visual elements of the Suixi Lion Head still needs to be conducted in detail from several major content blocks: shape, colour,

pattern, and decoration. Unlike previous regional analyses, studying the Suixi Lion Head requires comparison between the two major lion head forms of Suixi, in order to discover the uniqueness of the visual symbols of the Suixi Lion Head. Therefore, this section will include a large number of comparative picture analyses to clarify the visual characteristics and cultural connotations of its visual symbols.

4.3.6.2 Suixi Lion Head's Visual Elements Details and Symbols

i. Shape

The shape of Suixi lion heads blends the characteristics of both Foshan-style and Heshan-style lion heads. (Figure 4.85)

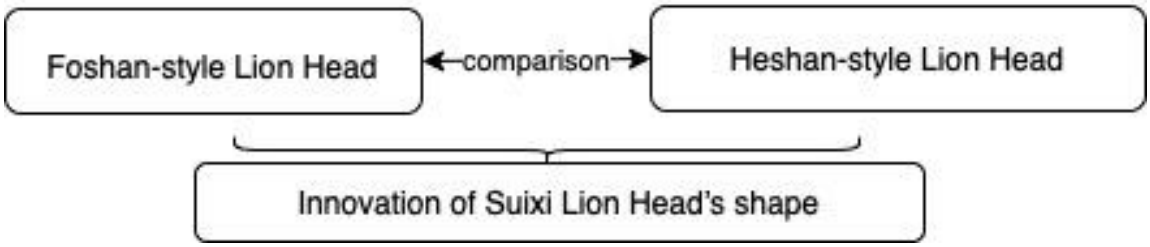


Figure 4.85: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Suixi Lion's Shape (by Zhan)

a) Size and Proportions

The modelling of Suixi Lion Head is diverse, but can generally be summarized as Foshan-style lion and Heshan-style lion. Besides, there are several modern innovative models of lion dance masks, such as Confucius and Eastern Sea Lion. According to interviewee I, who is a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage Suixi Lion Head artisan, the modelling and proportions of the lion dance masks in the Suixi Lion Dance Cultural Museum have become the standard for traditional Southern lion mask making internationally. Lion dancing is a sport competition, for fairness, the props need to be

standard, and standardized lion head masks are favored by lion dance performers. Refer to Appendix G.

Since the specifications of the lion head models produced by each workshop are different, this analysis cannot use the data collected in Foshan, Guangzhou and Heshan, but the researcher needs to list and analyse the data collected through interviews and field visits. Figure 4.86 on the left is the framework model of the modified Heshan-style No.3 lion, and on the right is the framework model of the modified Foshan-style No.3 lion. This research data will be compared with this standard size to reduce comparison errors.



Figure 4.86: Suixi Lion Head Frame Models (Left: Heshan-style Lion Head, Right: Foshan-style Lion Head, by Zhan, 2023)

Choosing the frame model as the main object of analysis is based on visual considerations, because different types of fur may interfere with the recognition of the two types of lion dance models. Based on the photos taken on site and the size information provided by the Suixi Lion Dance Cultural Museum, the researcher has drawn a simple outline diagram. Considering the visual recognizability and image application, this section only selects the front and side, these two main angles, to show the proportion features of its

modelling. For the influence of visual modelling, the outline analysis of top view and rear view is not particularly important. Through a simple outline frame analysis, readers can better understand the proportional relationship between the Heshan-style lion and Foshan-style lion, and discover their similarities and differences in modelling.

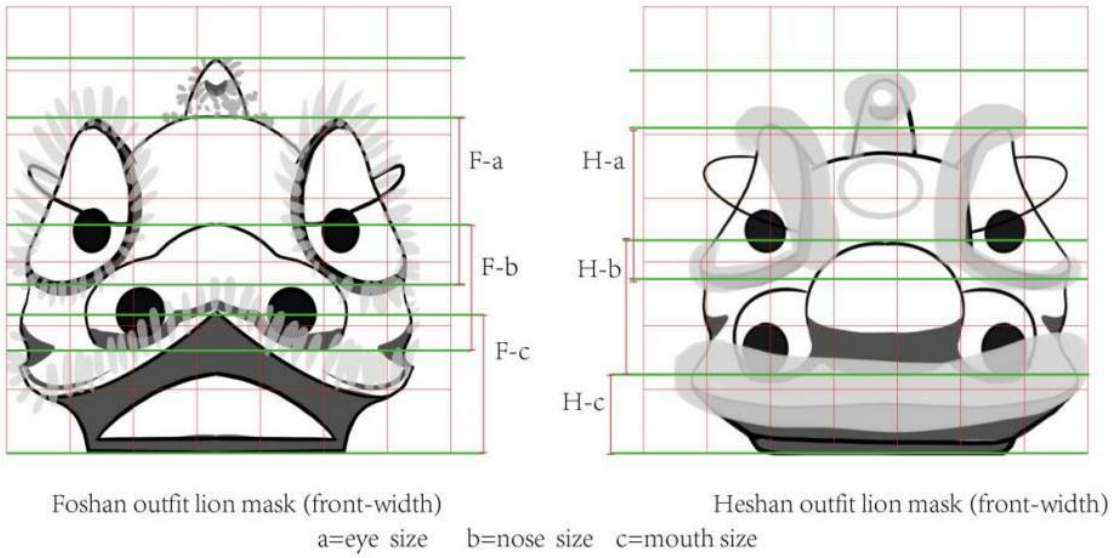


Figure 4.87: Comparison of Front Contour of Suixi Lion Head (Left: Foshan-style Lion Head, Right: Heshan-style Lion Head) （by Zhan）

Figure 4.87 depicts the proportional diagram of the front contour of Foshan Lion and Heshan Lion in traditional lion head masks. As shown in the figure, the facial features of the Foshan Lion, such as the eyes, nose, and mouth, present a similar and slightly staggered layout in terms of height proportion, this design strategy allows for the maximum display of the lion's facial features. The large and bright eyes, the garlic-shaped nose, and the upwardly expanding triangular mouth are the iconic modelling elements of the Foshan Lion. In contrast, the facial feature proportions of the Heshan Lion are not as

balanced as those of the Foshan Lion. Although the height proportions of the eyes and nose are close, the mouth is flat. In the interview, Interviewee I pointed out that since lion dance masks are all handmade, there are no two completely identical masks. In the production process, a difference of 1-2 cm in mask size is allowed. Therefore, the data diagrams and schematic diagrams described below may have an error of 1-2 cm. In the proportional diagram, ’a’ represents the size of the eyes, ’b’ is the size of the nose, ’c’ represents the size of the mouth, ’F’ represents Foshan Lion, and ’H’ represents Heshan Lion.

Table 4.6: Suixi Lion Mask Three Court Numerical Ratio

Name	Value (mm)	Percentage of total length (%)
F-a	26.2	42.3
F-b	19.7	31.8
F-c	21.7	35
H-a	24.0	40
H-b	21.4	35.7
H-c	12.6	21

As shown in Table 4.6, among the facial elements of the Foshan Lion, the eyes occupy the largest proportion of the total length (42.3%), the nose occupies the smallest proportion (31.8%), and the difference in the proportion between the mouth (35%) and the nose is not significant. The eyes of the Heshan Lion account for 40% of the total length, and are still the most noticeable part as a whole. The most obvious difference from the Foshan Lion is the proportion of the mouth, which only accounts for 21% of the total length of the Heshan Lion. From the above data, it can be inferred that the proportion of the three courts of the Foshan Lion is F-a>F-c>F-b, but because the largest proportion difference is only 7.3%, visually, the proportion of facial elements is relatively balanced.

On the contrary, the proportion of the three courts of the Heshan Lion is H-a>H-b>H-c, and the biggest data difference is 19%, so the eyes of the Heshan Lion look larger and more prominent.

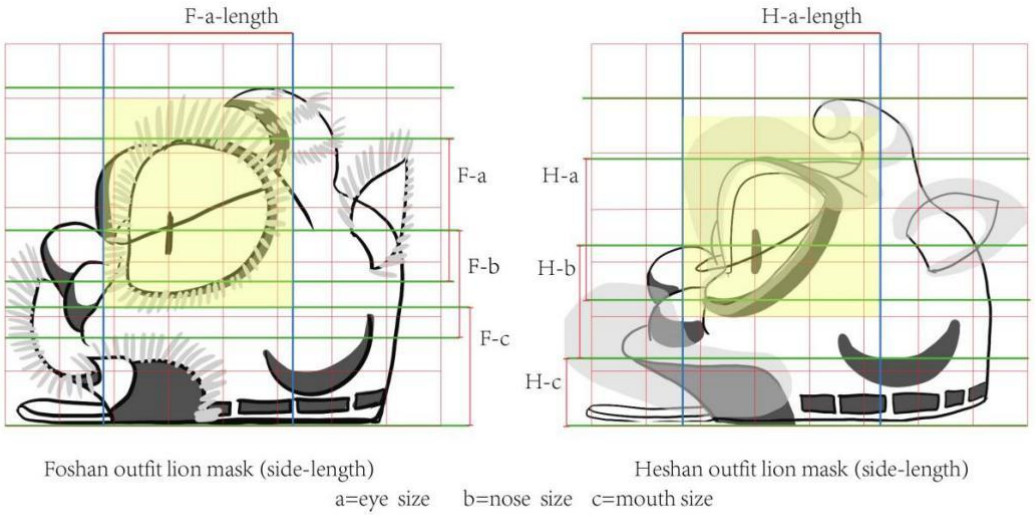


Figure 4.88: Comparison of Side Contour of Suixi Lion Head (Left: Foshan-style Lion, Right: Heshan-style Lion) （by Zhan）

Figure 4.88 presents a lateral contour depiction of the lion head mask. Observing this side contour, it is evident that while there are distinct shape variations between the Foshan Lion and the Heshan Lion, the ocular region in both masks commands the most substantial spatial presence, with their proportions showing a near uniformity. For the sake of offering a lucid comparison of the ocular dimensions of the two, the eye locations are highlighted with a yellow transparent rectangle in the illustration. The dimensions of the Foshan Lion's eyes are denoted as F-a-length for its length and F-a for its height, and analogous designations are applied for the Heshan Lion.

Table 4.7: The Numerical Proportion of The Eyes of Suixi Lion Mask

Name	Value (mm)	Percentage of total length (%)
F-a	26.2	42.3
F-a-length	34.8	46.4
H-a	24.0	40
H-a-length	36.3	42.7

Based on the information presented in Table 4.7, a clear observation can be drawn regarding the eye shapes of the two Suixi lion masks. Despite their distinct appearances, with one being in an expanded state and the other exuding a more natural look, both possess a relatively larger size. This prominent size is characteristic of the visual design inherent to the Suixi lion mask.

The front contour of the Suixi Lion is square. Referring to Figure 4.89, the width of the front contour of the Foshan Lion mask is set as F-w, and the height is F-h. The width-to-height ratio is approximately 1:0.95; At the same time, the width of the front contour of the Heshan Lion mask is set as H-w, and the height is H-h. The width-to-height ratio is approximately 1:0.92. Overlaying these two contours for observation, it is apparent that there are no significant differences in the basic proportions. However, there are slight discrepancies in specific styling, and these subtle differences are mainly influenced by the type of hair on the lion mask.

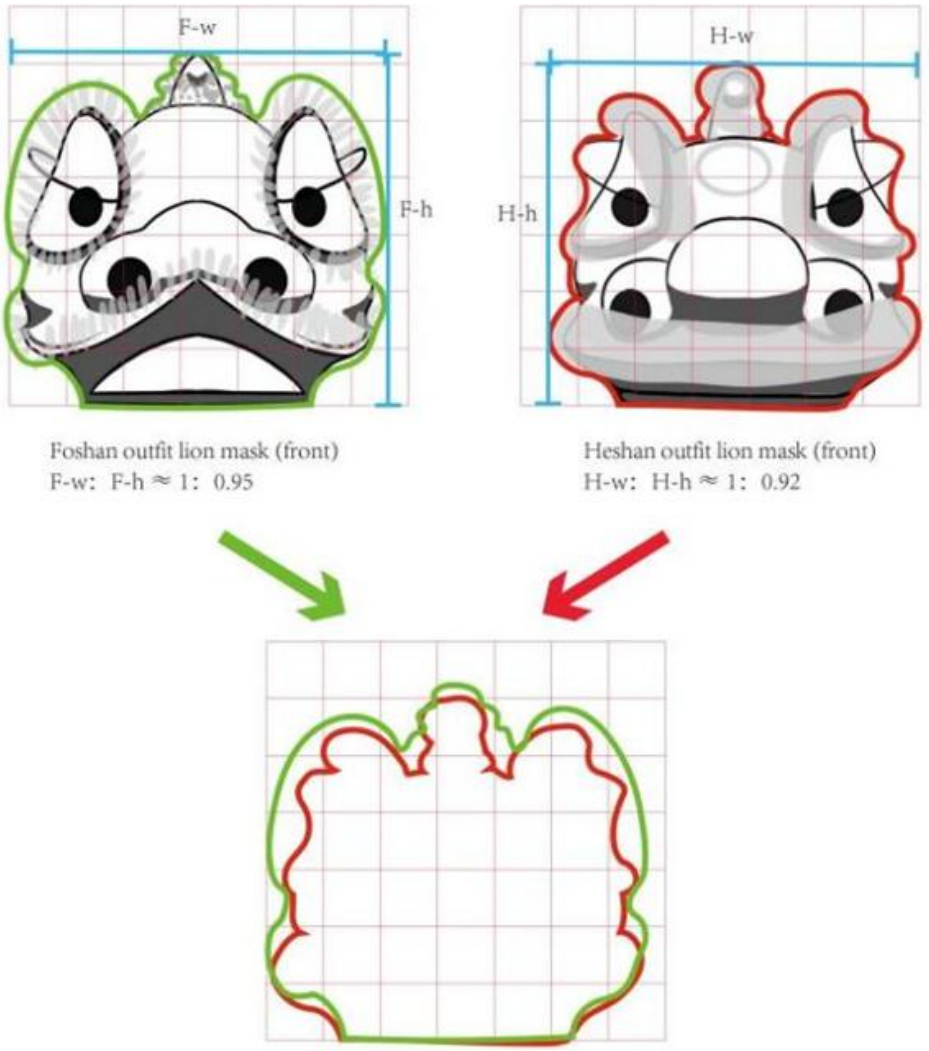


Figure 4.89: Comparison of Front Contours of Suixi Foshan-style and Heshan-style Lion (by Zhan)

Apart from analysing the styling by overlaying the outer contours, it is also necessary to pay attention to the appearance features of the face. For example, the positions of the foreheads of the two are different. The forehead of the Foshan Lion is more prominent, while that of the Heshan Lion is gentler. The former's nose shape is compact with hard lines, while the latter's nose is flatter with smoother lines. These features will be more prominent in the side styling analysis.

For the side contour of the Suixi Lion Head, the differences are significant. The side contour of the Foshan Lion mask is depicted with green lines, and the Heshan Lion mask is depicted with red lines. To more clearly display the characteristics of the side shape, a simplified blue contour line has been added on this basis, and important marker points have been set on it.

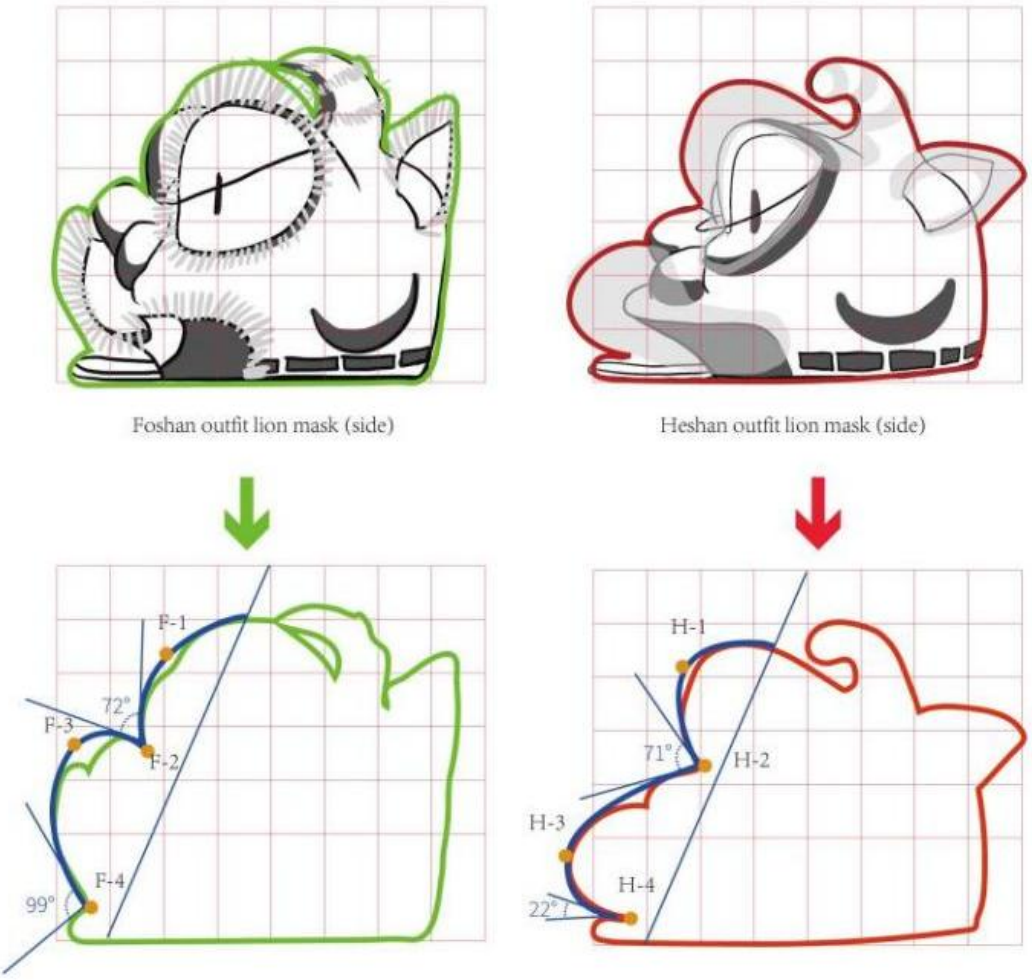


Figure 4.90: Comparison of Side Contours of Suixi Foshan-style and Heshan-style Lion (by Zhan)

As shown in Figure 4.90, the position of the forehead of the Foshan Lion mask overlaps with the position of the eyelashes around the eyes. The highest point is set as F-1, F-2 is the intersection point of the eyes and nose, the angle of the side face is about 72 degrees, F-3 is set as the highest point of the nose and mouth difference block (its height is influenced by the type of hair), and F-4 is the position where the mouth opens, the angle is approximately 99 degrees. Following the same method to analyse the side of the Heshan Lion mask, H-1 is the highest point of the protrusion of the lion's eyelashes, H-2 is the intersection point of the eyes and nose, the side face angle is about 71 degrees, H-3 is set as the highest point of the nose and mouth difference block (its height is influenced by the type of hair), and H-4 is the position where the mouth opens, the angle is approximately 22 degrees. From the observation of the auxiliary lines, there is a big difference on the side of the Foshan Lion and Heshan Lion masks, and the most noticeable differences are the angle at which the mouth opens and the horn on the top of the head. The Foshan Lion mask has a large mouth opening, the upper lip is upturned into an obtuse angle, the shape of the nose tends to go up, which makes the overall shape appear more fierce and powerful. The pointed top of the head is curved forward, combined with the stiff horse hair, making the overall contour of the Foshan Lion more aggressive and robust; on the contrary, the opening angle of the mouth of the Heshan Lion mask is only close to 22 degrees, the upper lip is downward forming an acute angle with the tongue, the shape of the nose is flatter compared to the Foshan Lion, the overall shape looks more gentle and cute, the horn on the top of the head is fist-shaped, coupled with soft and full wool, which makes the overall shape of the Heshan Lion appear softer and gentler.

Through the analysis and comparison of the contours, although the Suixi Lion Head retains the basic characteristics of the Foshan-style lion and the Heshan-style lion, the proportions of these two shapes are significantly different from the Foshan-style lion produced in Foshan and the Heshan-style lion produced in Heshan. Taking the third lion as an example, the length, width, and height ratio of the Foshan-style lion produced in Suixi is 1:0.87: 0.83; the Heshan-style lion is 1:0.76:0.71; while the length, width, and height ratio of the traditional Foshan Lion Head is approximately 1:1:1; the traditional Heshan Lion Head is approximately 1:0.69:0.78. Therefore, while drawing from the characteristics of the two lion heads, the Suixi Lion Head gradually integrates the two, forming the unique styling characteristics of the Suixi Lion Head.

a) Lion Horns

The horns in the Suixi Lion Head are relatively simple. Figure 4.91 shows the horns of the Foshan-style lions in the roles of Liu Bei and the Five Tiger Generals: A is the horn of Liu Bei's lion; B is the horn of Guan Gong's lion; C is the horn of Zhang Fei's lion; D is the horn of Zhang Yun's lion; E is the horn of Ma Chao's lion: F is the horn of Huang Zhong's lion. The horns of the six characters in the figure are all bamboo shoot-shaped sharp horns. The shapes are consistent, and only the colours are slightly different.

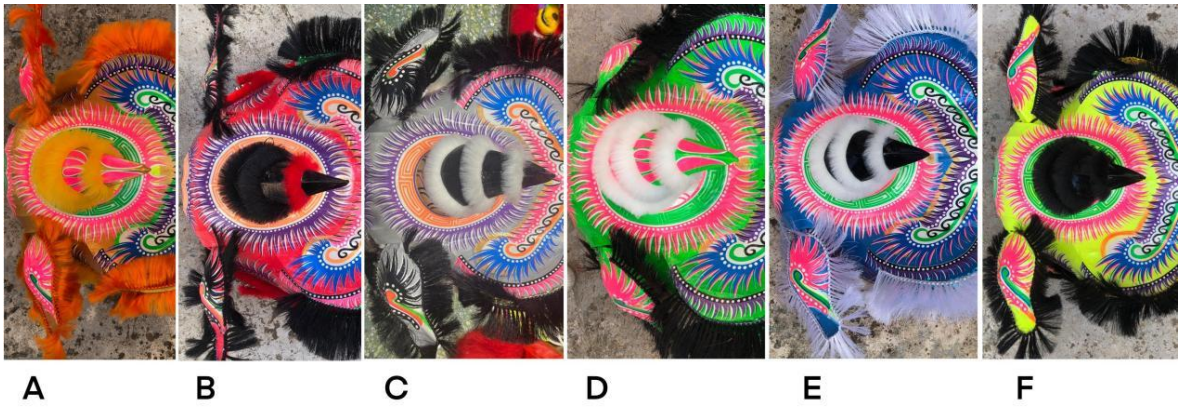


Figure 4.91: Horn Design of Suixi Lion Head (by Zhan, 2022)

In Figures 4.92 A-F, the horns of the six roles correspond to those in Figure 4.91. In the design of traditional Foshan Lion Heads, the horns of Liu Bei, symbolizing the emperor, are dragon horns; the horns of Guan Gong, symbolizing loyalty, are fist-shaped horns; the horns of Zhang Fei, symbolizing belligerence, are hard, bamboo shoot-like horns; the horns of Zhao Yun, symbolizing bravery, are eagle horns; the horns of Ma Chao, symbolizing filial piety, are blue bamboo shoot-like horns; the horns of Huang Zhong, symbolizing loyalty, are long curved horns.

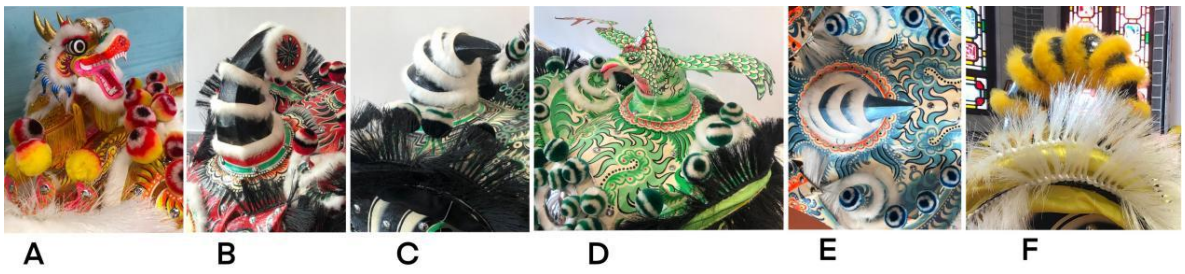


Figure 4.92: Horn Design of Traditional Foshan Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

However, Suixi Lion Head workshops are not incapable of producing complex lion head designs. Figure 4.93 shows the horn design of a Suixi Liu Bei lion in the Foshan-style,

where the eagle horns are complex, brightly coloured, and lifelike. However, these lion heads with eagle horns are not commonly produced. Interviewee H stated that only custom-made lion head masks can have these special horn designs, but due to their unique style and longer production cycle, they are more expensive and sell less. Lower sales volume may result in reduced income for artisans and shrinkage of the industry, which could have a negative impact on the preservation and development of intangible cultural heritage projects.

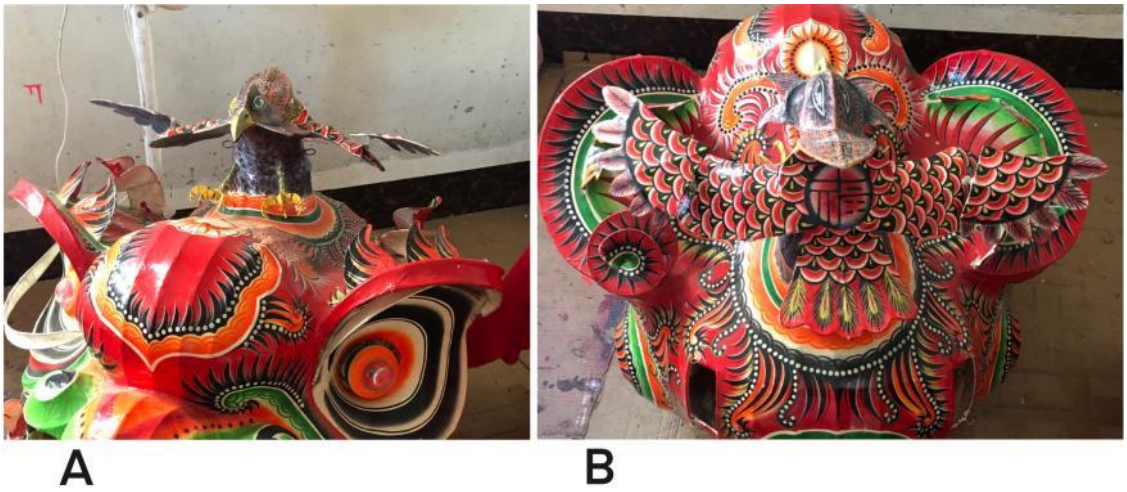


Figure 4.93: Eagle Horn Design of Suixi Foshan-style Head (by Zhan, 2022)

The horns of Suixi Foshan-styles are less complex than those of traditional Foshan lions, which can primarily be attributed to the difference in their production methods. Due to an active market and large lion head sales, Suixi Lion Head workshops promote standardized assembly line production (Figure 4.94). The four steps of "tying, pasting, writing, and embellishing" are carried out by different artisans, which can speed up lion head production and reduce discrepancies in the appearance of each mask. In contrast, traditional Foshan Lion Head designs, which are more intricate and complex, require

highly skilled masters for completion. The horn designs shown in Figure 4.92 are not products of assembly line production, resulting in slower production speeds, difficulty in standardization, and relatively lower efficiency.

The differences in customer groups and sales channels result in differences in production modes between the two regions' lion head masks, which are directly reflected in the visual elements of the lion heads from the two places.



Figure 4.94: Scene from the Suixi Lion Head Workshop（by Zhan, 2022）

b) Lion's Cheeks

Based on the design tendencies of the size, proportions, and details of Suixi Lion Head models, it can be concluded that the inheritors of Suixi Lion Head production have their unique insights into the visual elements of Suixi Lion Heads.

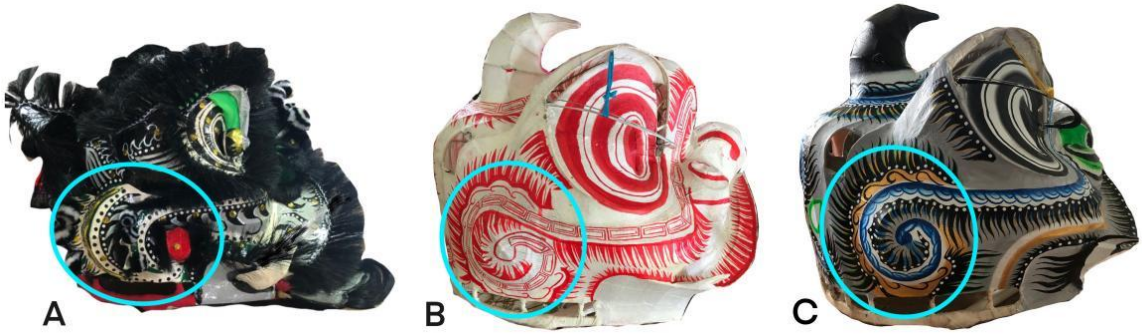


Figure 4.95: Comparison of Cheek Structures between Foshan Lion Head and Suixi Foshan-style Head (by Zhan,, 2023)

The dual-cheek structure featuring a ’Guen’ (round, flat piece) is characteristic of traditional Foshan Lion Heads (Figure 4.95A). B shows a white primer of a Suixi Foshan-style, which uses the round cheek design of the traditional Heshan lion, and C displays the round cheek after colouring. As mentioned earlier, the standardized assembly-line production mode of Suixi Lion Head workshops impacts the detailed craftsmanship, which is also relevant to the use of round cheeks in place of dual cheeks in the design of Foshan-styles. In addition to considering traditional visual symbols of Foshan-styles and Heshan Lions in design, Suixi Lion Heads also seek to carve out a unique development positioning specific to Suixi. Therefore, when Suixi Lion Head inheritors explore the development direction of the craft, they integrate traditional features, customer needs, and innovative designs, gradually shifting the positioning of Suixi Lion Heads from “subordinate culture’” to “mainstream culture”.

ii. Colour

Currently, the Suixi lion dance prop and equipment industry is known for its “large scale, high output, and high cost-effectiveness” (Ma, 2023). In Suixi Lion Head workshops,

there are dozens of lion heads with various shapes, including Foshan-styles, Heshan-lions, “Old Master”, and several innovative lion heads. Mass production and repeated creative attempts provide development possibilities for the style of Suixi Lion Heads. Based on field research, Suixi lion dances feature extremely high colour saturation, with vibrant colours that blend the colour characteristics of Foshan-styles, Heshan Lions, and even Malayan lions. According to interviewee G, lion heads with different colour combinations represent different characters. The six major characters of Suixi Lion Heads align with those of Foshan Lion Heads. (Figure 4.96)

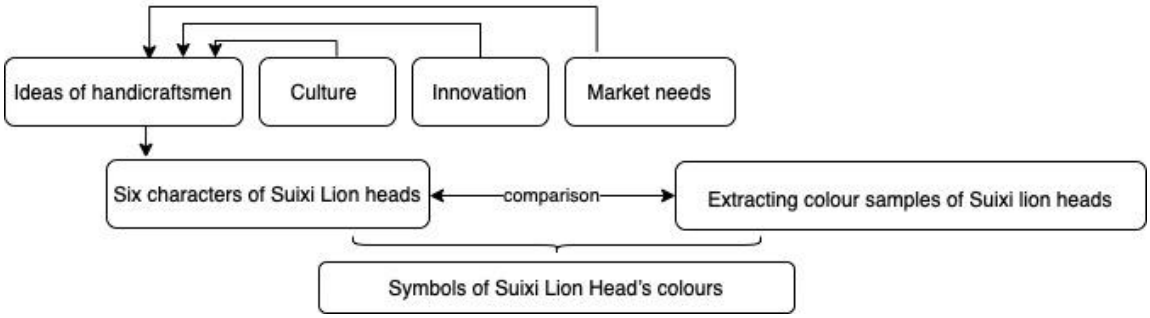


Figure 4.96: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Suixi Lion’s Colours (by Zhan)

Table 4.8 provides a detailed colour schematic of Suixi lion dance masks, predominantly illustrating the colour distribution associated with the masks of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong. For print-based colour verification, CMYK values are employed, whereas RGB values serve for electronic device colour validation. Given that an objective of this research is to meticulously extract and systematize the visual elements intrinsic to the lion dance, and subsequently disseminate them either through print mediums or digital platforms, the colour components of the masks representing the aforementioned six characters have been systematically cataloged

with both their CMYK and RGB values. This approach ensures a comprehensive foundation for further colour analysis.

Table 4.8: Colour Schematic Diagram of Suixi Lion Awakening Mask

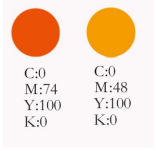
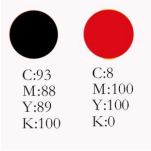
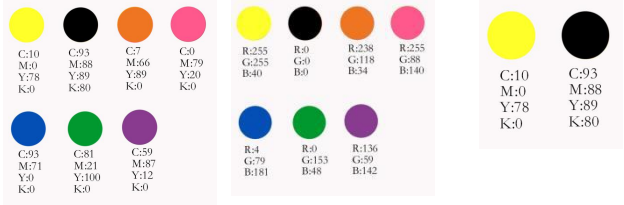
Name	Photos	CMYK	RGB	Theme colour
Liu Bei Lion				
Guan Gong Lion				
Zhang Fei Lion				
Zhao Yun LIon				

Table 4.8 continued

Ma Chao Lion		
Huang Zhong Lion		

The colour values in the table above indicate that the colours used in Suixi lion dances are highly saturated and bold. Each lion mask character has a main colour theme and similar auxiliary colours, such as green, blue, purple, and magenta, appear on almost every lion head. According to interviewee G, a variety of vibrant colours are used in the colouring process to cater to the public's aesthetics. However, this can also lead to difficulties in recognizing different characters.

To better analyse the colour composition of different character lion masks, I conducted detailed colour analysis on the front, side, and back of these six typical lion masks. Figure 4.97 is a colour extraction diagram of the six lion heads from the front. Each lion head is placed into a 10x10 grid, and the number of grid squares occupied by each colour is calculated to determine the percentage of each colour in the lion head. Assuming that the proportion of a colour is N, the number of grid squares it occupies is n, and the number of blank squares in the grid is b, then N=n/(100-b). For example, the proportion of

orange colour (C:0 M:74 Y:100 K:0) in the front of Liu Bei Lion is N=34/ (100-20) =42.5%. It is worth noting that there may be some deviation in the calculation of grid numbers. However, it is unrealistic to expect absolute rationality in folklore arts, so the percentages obtained are approximate.



Figure 4.97: Colour Extraction of Suixi Foshan-style Masks (front) (by Zhan, 2022)

Using N=n/(100-b) to calculate the main colour proportion of the six lion masks, the data obtained is shown in Figure 4.98. The lion's front image largely determines people's understanding and impression of it, followed by its side from different angles, and then it's back. A pie chart shows the main colour proportions on the front, with

miscellaneous colours shown in gray. The main colour proportions are all above 43%, while the proportions of miscellaneous colours range from 20% to 43%. The higher the main colour proportion and the lower the miscellaneous colour proportion, the clearer the character features of the lion mask, and vice versa.

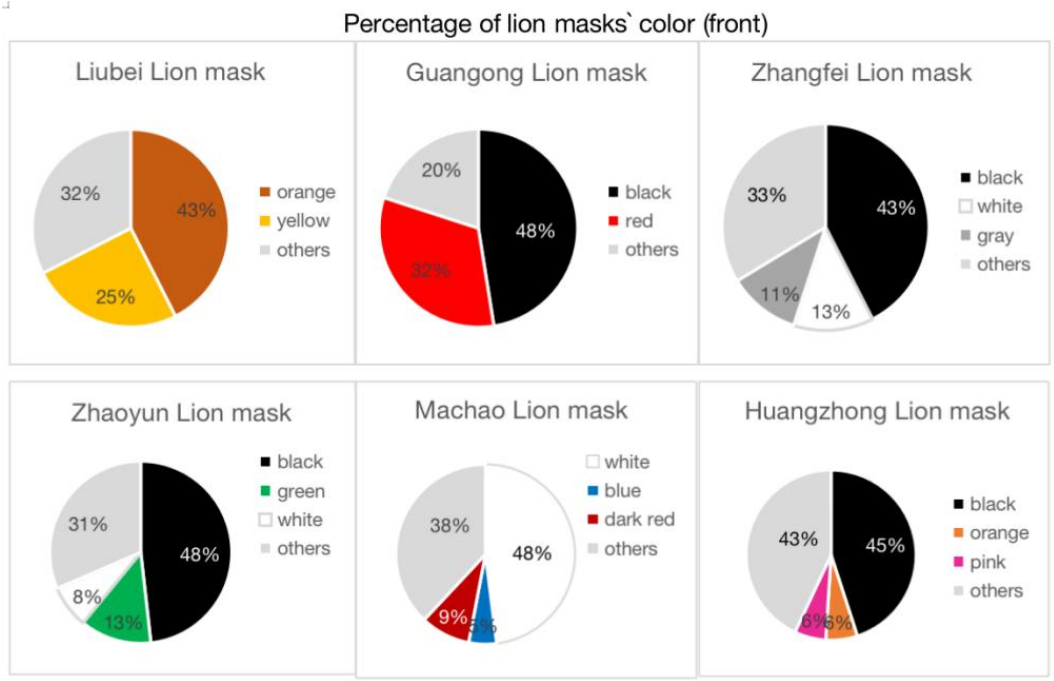


Figure 4.98: Colour Proportion Analysis of Suixi Foshan-style Masks(front) (by Zhan)

Through a comprehensive analysis of the above two figures, it can be seen that the character features of the Guan Gong Lion mask are the most pronounced, while those of the Huang Zhong Lion mask are the weakest. In terms of visual effects, the Guan Gong Lion mask and the Huang Zhong Lion mask are not very different, mainly because their proportions of black are similar and their secondary colours are both in the red spectrum. Therefore, such colour usage makes it difficult for the audience to recognize the characters on the masks.

The same method is used to calculate the colour proportions of the side of the lion masks (Figure 4.100), and the data obtained is shown in Figure 4.99.



Figure 4.99: Colour Extraction of Suixi Foshan-style Masks (side) (by Zhan, 2022)

The inclusion of a pie chart delineating the percentages offers a clearer visualization of the colour distributions, as depicted in Figure 4.87. Upon analysis, it becomes evident that the colour proportion data reveals a pronounced shift between the frontal and lateral perspectives of the Huang Zhong lion mask. Predominantly, the frontal aspect of the Huang Zhong lion mask is characterized by shades of black and orange. In

contrast, the lateral or side perspective predominantly features tones of black and lemon yellow.

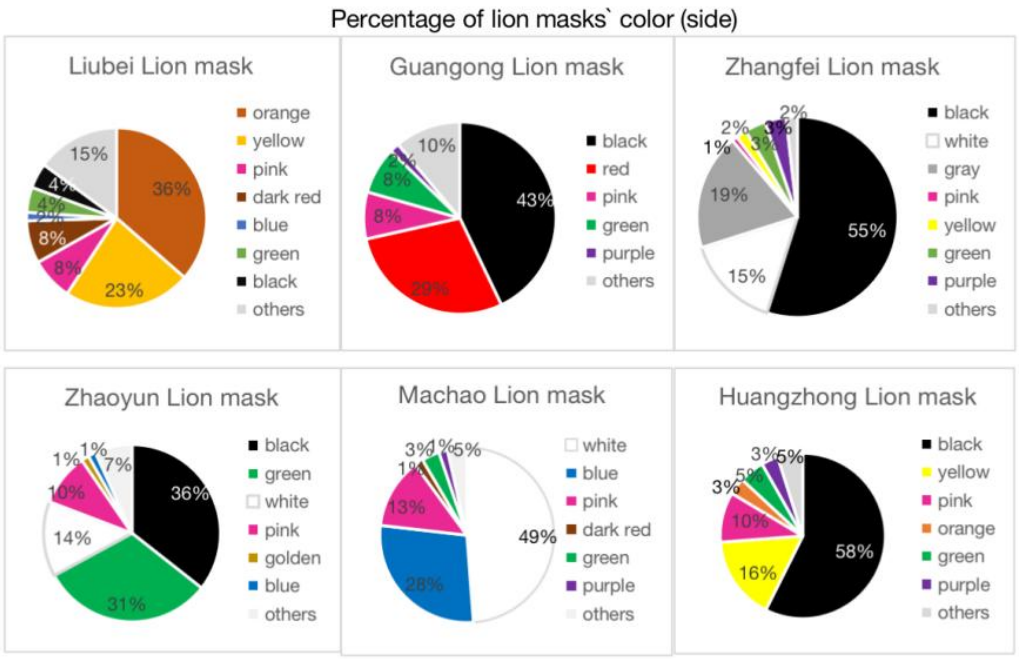


Figure 4.100: Colour Proportions Analysis of Suixi Foshan-style Masks (Side) (by Zhan)

As the above two figures illustrate, there are significant differences in colour between the Guan Gong Lion mask and Huang Zhong Lion mask, making the features of the six lion masks in different roles particularly distinct. The key factor determining the main colour theme of the lion head is the colour of the fur, which accounts for the majority of the colour palette and is primarily reflected in the fur itself. Furthermore, the decorative colours are quite similar, mainly comprising pure shades of pink, green, blue, and purple.

The back part of the lion mask is still rich and colourful (Figure 4.101). The lion head has high colour purity, and its colouration is diverse. Since the proportion of hair in the back of the head has decreased, the coloured portion has increased accordingly.



Figure 4.101: Colour Extraction of Suixi Foshan-style Masks (back) (by Zhan, 2022)

The pie chart depicted in Figure 4.102 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the colour composition for the back of the lion head. While the theme colour still takes up the major proportion, other painted parts share very similar colours, such as pink, green, blue, purple, all of which are commonly used in Suixi Lion Head colouring.

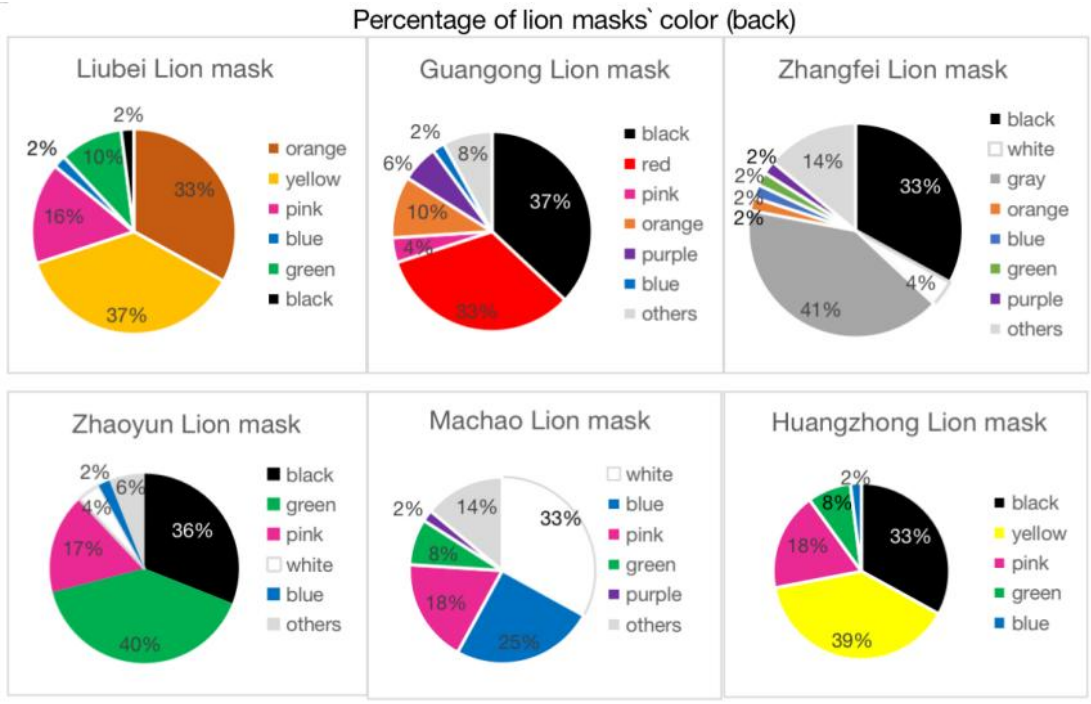


Figure 4.102: Colour Proportions Analysis of Suixi Foshan-style Masks (back) (by Zhan)

Suixi Lion Heads follow the character settings of Foshan Lion Heads. However, the use of theme colour, colour distribution, and colour matching methods in Suixi's six Foshan-style heads reveal similarities and differences with traditional Foshan Lion Heads.

iii. Pattern

Suixi Lion Heads employ a wide variety of patterns, incorporating those from Foshan and Heshan Lion Heads, along with other innovative designs. Most of the decorative patterns on Suixi Lion Heads originate from traditional ancient motifs used in Foshan Lion Heads. (Figure 4.103)

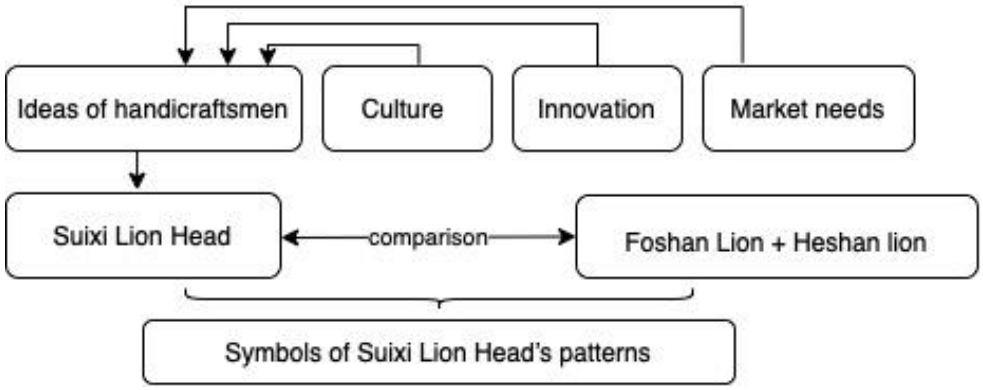


Figure 4.103: Symbolic Analysis Digram of Suixi Lion's Patterns (by Zhan)

Figure 4.104 shows patterns A and B as Tang grass patterns; C and D as Water Patterns; E as a return pattern; F as a Beaded Pattern; G as a pattern based on a variant of the character for fortune. A detailed analysis of these patterns and their uses has been provided earlier, with the application, naming, and positioning on Suixi Lion Heads being almost identical to those in other regions.



Figure 4.104: Traditional Patterns in Suixi Lion Head (by Zhan, 2022)

Interviewee H refers to the patterns spread across the lion head mask in Figure 4.105 as "Guan Dao （Long-handled sword for fighting on horseback) pattern". Using these extensively symbolizes bravery, as if the whole body is textured with sharp blades, representing "valour and prowess". The researcher also questioned the term "small blade

pattern” in the analysis of Tang grass patterns on Foshan Lion Heads. Whether referred to as “small blade pattern” or “Guan Dao pattern”, it is a variant of Tang grass and scroll patterns. As most ancient Chinese traditional patterns symbolize good luck, even if the creator intends to express a “warlike” character trait, the ultimate meaning returns to “auspiciousness”.

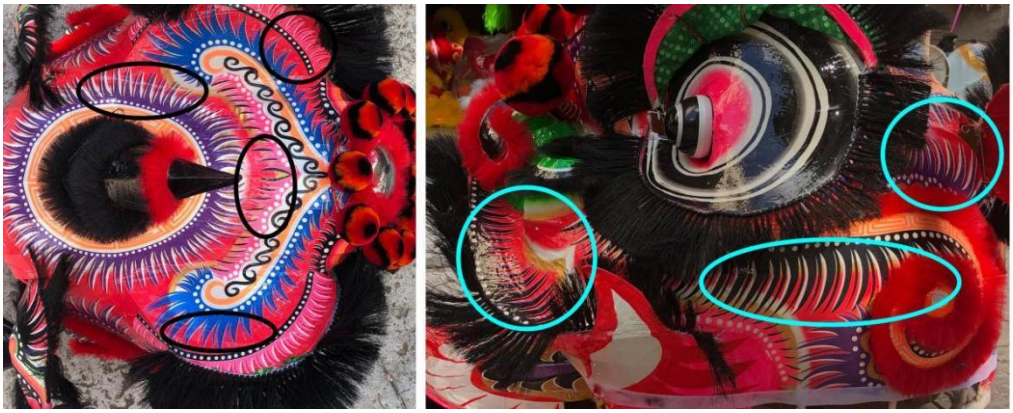


Figure 4.105: “Guan Dao Patterns” in Suixi Lion Head (by Zhan, 2022)

From collected field photos, it is apparent that Suixi Lion Head craftsmen possess a strong desire to explore new visual symbols. Figure 4.106A shows a gradient fire pattern; B is a combination of fire, bead, and Tang grass patterns; C is a Water Pattern, different from traditional styles; D is a realistic carp pattern; E is a combination of four-pointed and six-pointed stars; F is a pattern from Chinese landscape painting. These patterns are popular and align with the public’s expectation of “auspiciousness”.

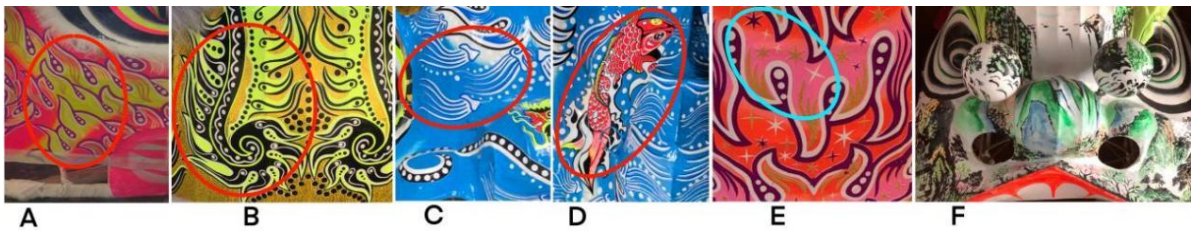


Figure 4.106: Innovative Patterns in Suixi Lion Head (by zhan, 2022)

Figure 4.107 displays lion heads whose patterns have all been replaced by waterproof stickers. This decoration method, originating from Malaysia, has several benefits: 1. it saves time in painting patterns and shortens production cycles; 2. waterproof stickers attached to the lion head's base prevent moisture and prolong its lifespan; 3. modern materials used in stickers offer a variety of styles, including reflective, shiny, fluorescent; 4. printed patterns have high colour saturation and are less likely to fade.



Figure 4.107: Innovative Pattern Stickers in Suixi Lion Head (by Zhan, 2022)

Overall, the analysis of Suixi Lion Head patterns reveals that the craftsmen have a relatively open attitude towards their creative work. They recognize and respect the importance of tradition, yet also understand that “innovation” is a vital means to invigorate traditional crafts.

iv. Decoration

The decoration of Suixi Lion Heads includes elements such as hair, whiskers, tongue, ball tassels, flower baskets, rivets, and reflective mirrors. These elements are not significantly different from the decorations used in lion dance masks in other regions. The main distinction lies merely in the number of decorations; for example, the number of ball tassels used in Suixi Lion Heads is far fewer than those in Foshan and Guangzhou Lion Heads but more than those in Heshan. However, such adjustments do not alter the meaning of the visual symbols, and so a detailed description is not necessary here.

4.3.6.3 Analysis and Summary of Factors Affecting the Visual Symbol in Suixi Lion Head

This section employs comparative analysis and image analysis methodologies to examine the visual symbols of Suixi lion heads. The study reveals that Suixi lion head crafting techniques have, in the process of inheritance and development, assimilated and refined the excellent visual elements from other regions. These elements have been synthesized, abstracted, and creatively reinterpreted to form the unique appearance of Suixi lion heads. Figure 4.108 illustrates the factors influencing the visual elements of Suixi lion heads: the light gray sections represent fundamental cultural markers that are immutable; the green sections indicate modifiable factors and potential areas for future development.

The influences of Foshan and Heshan lion heads, which have been discussed earlier in this chapter, are integrated into other key points and are therefore not listed separately.

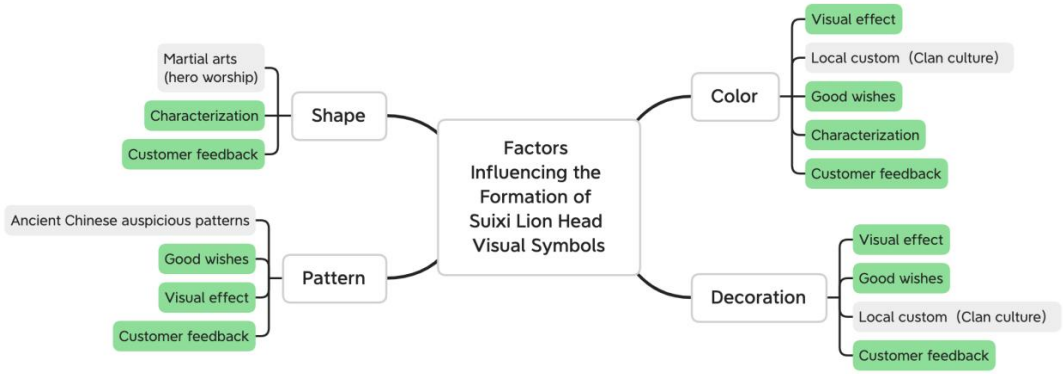


Figure 4.108: Factors Influencing Visual Symbols of Suixi Lion Head（by Zhan）

Suixi lion heads, characterized by their large production and high sales volumes, have developed a distinctive visual language through a process of continuous adaptation and integration. The feedback from customers, owing to the significant market size, has become a crucial guide for the creative process. This iterative cycle of production and feedback ensures that Suixi lion heads remain relevant and responsive to contemporary demands.

The traditional craftsmanship of Suixi lion heads, while absorbing external influences, has maintained certain core elements that are considered integral to its cultural identity. These core elements, depicted in light gray in Figure 4.91, are non-negotiable as they represent the historical and cultural essence of Suixi lion heads. However, the green sections of the figure denote areas where changes and innovations can occur. These

flexible elements provide the space for creative evolution, allowing Suixi lion heads to adapt to new aesthetic trends and functional requirements.

Despite the potential for innovation, there is a growing concern that the rapid industrialization and commercialization of Suixi lion heads may lead to a dilution of the traditional cultural meanings embedded in their visual symbols. As the industry expands, there is a risk that the original cultural narratives and symbolisms may be overshadowed by the drive for market competitiveness and consumer appeal. This shift could result in a loss of cultural depth and authenticity, which are critical to the historical significance of Suixi lion heads.

Nevertheless, Suixi lion heads continue to hold a prominent position within the lion head industry, serving as a benchmark for quality and design. The visual symbols of Suixi lion heads, with their intricate blend of traditional elements and modern adaptations, remain a topic of considerable interest and debate. It is imperative to scrutinize these symbols not only for their aesthetic and functional qualities but also for their cultural and historical significance.

In conclusion, the visual symbols of Suixi lion heads reflect a complex interplay between tradition and innovation. The immutable core elements preserve the cultural heritage, while the modifiable aspects allow for contemporary relevance and creative expression. As Suixi lion heads navigate the challenges of modernization and globalization, maintaining a balance between these two facets is crucial. This balance will ensure that Suixi lion heads continue to embody both the rich cultural traditions from which they originated and the dynamic, evolving context in which they exist.

4.3.7 Analysis Summary of Lion Head Visual Symbols from Four Guangdong Regions

Through comparative analysis of the contours, designs, and proportions of lion masks from various regions, the researcher discerns subtle visual distinctions and specific meanings unique to each region. These variations manifest in specific visual characteristics of the lion masks, such as colour preferences and choices of decorative patterns in different regions. Both indices and symbols are imbued within these visual elements. The results of this analysis illuminate the multifaceted meanings of each visual element, fulfilling the research objective of investigating the motivations by the changes in the visual symbols of the lion masks and their cultural implications.

While differences exist among various regional lion masks, the basic proportions and structures are roughly similar, possibly due to the influence of Guangdong culture. Although Guangdong lion dance culture originates from the same source, different regions' masks often reflect the area's specific cultural temperament and aesthetic tendencies. For example, the Foshan lion mask has hard lines, a wide mouth-opening angle, and an upward nose shape, making the overall shape appear vigorous and robust, displaying Foshan's cultural strength and courage. In contrast, the Heshan lion mask has a smaller mouth-opening angle, a flat nose shape, and smooth lines, making its overall appearance seem more gentle and cute, reflecting Heshan's mildness and friendliness. Overall, this chapter's analysis reveals the rich and diverse lion mask culture in the Guangdong region and how lion head masks manifest cultural characteristics and temperaments of each area through unique visual symbols.

The Foshan Lion Head emphasizes traditional Foshan lion dance culture. Guangzhou's visual symbols are nearly consistent with Foshan, Heshan's design serves Heshan's dance steps, and Suixi's lion head combines features from all regions, continuously innovating and its industrialized production model has become a national benchmark. During this chapter's analysis, the researcher found some discrepancies between the results and certain recorded or inherited descriptions. On the other hand, by displaying the analysis results, it can inform traditional cultural researchers, artistic creators, and industry professionals of the current chaotic and inaccurate information regarding Guangdong's lion dance culture.

4.4 Data Framework of Visual Symbols from Guangdong Awakening Lion Mask

In this section, I will delve deeply into the significant findings of the visual symbolism of Guangdong's Lion Dance masks, comparing these discoveries with existing recorded knowledge and narratives. Based on the preceding analysis, this discussion will focus on two core questions: Firstly, why are there discrepancies between the analysis results and some documented literature or accounts from inheritors, and what kind of impact might these differences have on our understanding of the culture surrounding the Guangdong Lion Dance masks? Secondly, in the data analysis process, inconsistencies and inaccuracies emerged in the information about the culture of Guangdong's Lion Dance masks - how did these issues arise, and how might they be addressed and improved? In addressing these questions, I will juxtapose the analysis results with literature and interview data (Figure 4.109), revealing crucial insights for traditional culture researchers, art creators, and industry practitioners, aiming to offer a fresh perspective and

understanding for the study and preservation of the culture of Guangdong's Lion Dance masks.

Accurate data documentation has a positive influence on the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage projects. Within this data framework on the visual symbols of Guangdong's Lion Dance masks, it's essential to compile a detailed list of visual elements and have a precise understanding of their symbolism to truly capture the power of "culture" within these intangible heritage items.

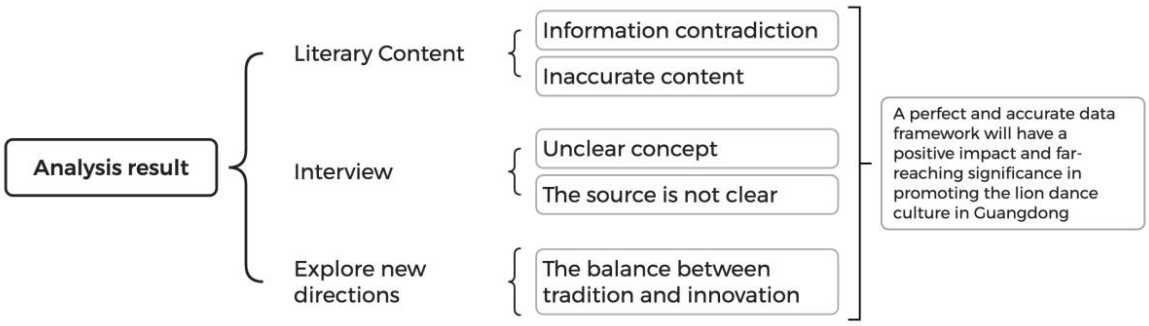


Figure 4.109: Argumentative Logic Framework for Data Construction（by Zhan）

4.4.1 Discrepancies between Research Findings and Traditional Perceptions

4.4.1.1 Discrepancies between Analysis Results and Documented Literature

From the literature review, it became evident to the researcher that there is a dearth of studies on the Guangdong Lion Dance lion's head. Notably, records on the Guangzhou Lion Dance and Heshan Lion Dance are virtually nonexistent. A significant portion of the data in this study was sourced from interviews and field research. Upon comparison with analytical results, it was discerned that even within the limited valid reference literature, numerous contested assertions persist.

Table 4.9: Comparison between Literary Content and Analytical Results

Literary Content	Analysis result	Contradiction point
The "Southern Lion" is also known as the "Awakening Lion" (Li, 2012; Jiang, 2007; Wei, and Liu, Z, 2015; Xue et al., 2021).	The "Awakening Lion" can be termed as "Southern Lion", yet the designation "Southern Lion" is not exclusively reserved for the Awakening Lion.	The definition of "Southern Lion".
The Tang Grass Pattern is alternatively termed the "Curled Grass Pattern" (Zhu, 2022; Li, 2021; Yin, 2018). For a more ornate presentation of the Tang Grass Pattern, refer to the figure (Li, 2018). The Grass Dragon pattern, Grass pattern, and Twining Branch patterns (Wu and Wang, 2021).	The "Honeysuckle Pattern" and the "Tang Grass Pattern" on the lion head masks should be referred to as the "Curled Grass Pattern". The term "Tang Grass Pattern" specifically denotes the curled grass design from the Tang Dynasty.	The pattern on the lion head mask, commonly referred to as the "Tang Grass Pattern", would be more appropriately named the "Curled Grass Pattern".
Knife and Sword patterns (Li, 2017; Xie, 2021)	The "Knife Pattern" does not mimic the texture of a knife but represents the design used on knives. Thus, the naming of the "Sword Pattern" is derived from its visual resemblance.	The definition of the "Knife Pattern", and the similar "mini-knife" designs on the lion head, which are still variants of the Curled Grass Pattern.
A frequent motif painted on the ears is the "spiral pattern" (Han and Cheng, 2014; Zhou, 2014; Xie, 2023).	Water Patterns are diverse in form. Spirals within the "Water Pattern" still fall under the category of Water Patterns. While the spiral pattern is pictographic, the Water Pattern serves as a symbol.	The definition of the "Water Pattern" remains ambiguous.
Flower basket pattern (Lin, 1993; Hanand Cheng, 2014; Xie, 2023)	The flower basket is a raised three-dimensional shape, not just a simple painted pattern. Painting the flower basket is considered a secondary approach.	The craftsmanship involved in creating the "Flower Basket".
In the earliest Awakening Lion decorations, the Fire Pattern was the most prominent. With the propagation and transmission of Chinese Awakening Lion traditional culture, the Fire Pattern was gradually replaced by other designs (Xie, 2021).	The Fire Pattern is a traditional pattern, which can also be viewed as a variation of the Curled Grass Pattern.	The "Fire Pattern" found on the lion dance mask is a variant of the Curled Grass Pattern.
The "Tadpole Pattern", symbolizing abundant offspring and blessings (Wu and Wang, 2021).	No corresponding examples provided.	According to field investigations, no such findings have been documented.

Table 4.9 continued

The primary colour theme of the Liu Bei lion is white, complemented by shades of yellow and pink (Li, 2017). This lion often showcases white, yellow, or pink faces, often rendered in bright colours (Han and Cheng, 2014). Characterized the colour features of the Liu Bei lion as white, yellow, pink, and liver-coloured. (Yin, 2018).	Whether it's the Foshan-style lion or the Heshan-style lion, the Liu Bei lion consistently adopts a yellow base with colourful patterns.	The colour scheme principles of the Liu Bei lion.

As shown in Table 4.9, there are some discrepancies between the documented content in the literature and the analysis results of this study (content with no discrepancies is not included in the table). These discrepancies primarily arise in the definition of concepts, the naming of patterns, and the colour scheme rules of the Liu Bei lion. For instance, the statement "Southern Lion is also known as Awakening Lion" frequently appears in literature. However, the official website of China's intangible cultural heritage explicitly lists the categories of the Southern Lion, and the "Awakening Lion" is merely one subtype within the southern lion dance tradition.

Regarding the naming and origin of patterns, there exists significant information variability. The primary decorative pattern on the lion dance mask, the Tang Grass Pattern, has multiple interpretations that remain unresolved. While the "Tang Grass Pattern" has been referred to as the "Curled Grass Pattern" or "Creeper Pattern", it is an extension of the honeysuckle pattern. The "Tang Grass Pattern" could be interpreted as the "Curled Grass Pattern" from the Tang Dynasty, characterized by various flowers combined with vines symbolizing wealth and honor. However, these patterns do not resemble those on the

lion head mask(Figures 4.31, 4.32, 4.33). The Curled Grass Pattern used on the lion dance mask is often labeled by lion mask makers as the “Knife Pattern”, “Closed Knife Pattern”, “Sword Pattern”, “Mini-Knife Pattern” and so on . Yet, literature review, interviews, and fieldwork suggest that these “knife” related patterns are actually variants of the “Tang Grass Pattern”. However, if the Tang Grass Pattern represents the Curled Grass Pattern from the Tang Dynasty and the Curled Grass Pattern on the lion dance is closely related to the knife pattern, it would be more appropriate to refer to the Tang Grass Pattern used on the lion dance mask as the “Curled Grass Pattern”.

Given this naming convention, the “Knife Pattern” category and other combined patterns such as the “Grass Tail Pattern” (Lin, 1993; Li ,2022) could all be described as variants of the “Curled Grass Pattern” (Figures 4.110).



Figure 4.110：Grass Tail Patterns. A variation of curly grass pattern -- Grass Tail Pattern (Lin Mingti,1993); B, C Grass Tail Pattern（by Zhan, 2023）

The evolution of the Curled Grass Pattern offers insight into the underlying

significance of the pattern. Both the Curled Grass and Tang Grass Patterns symbolize the vigor and vitality of growing vines. On the lion dance, the Curled Grass Pattern not only carries this connotation but its appearance also resembles the robust growth of fur. The short and sharp "Knife Pattern" also conveys the meanings of bravery, strength, and combativeness. Evidently, this visual symbol has multiple layers of meaning, suggesting that the lion dance, as a cultural label that is both traditional and innovative, not only carries profound Chinese culture but also enjoys international appreciation.

Upon analysis, the "Spiral Pattern" is very similar to the Water Pattern. The Spiral Pattern is referred to as the Whirlpool Pattern or Water Vortex Pattern. A large number of Whirlpool Patterns were found on the painted pottery of Majiayao in China, with various manifestations on the pottery (Luo, 2020). However, using the term "Spiral Pattern" for the lion dance mask isn't fitting. Visually, the Whirlpool Pattern is a name based on resemblance. Since the lion dance is considered an auspicious entity, the symbols on it all contain auspicious patterns. The Water Pattern symbolizes wealth and continuity. As shown in Figure 4.111, the whirlpool pattern on the lion dance mask looks very similar to flowing water. Although this can also be called a Spiral or Whirlpool Pattern, its symbolic significance is closer to the Water Pattern. Hence, referring to the Spiral Pattern on the lion mask as the "Water Pattern" is more appropriate.



Figure 4.111： Spiral Patterns. Left: Continuous Form of The Majiayao-type Spiral Pattern (Luo, 2020); Right: Spiral Pattern on the lion Mask (by Zhan, 2022)

Flower Basket Pattern in ceramic decorative motifs are relatively common (Zhang, 2012). Figure 4.112A depicts a Qianlong-period famille rose basket pattern fish and algae rimmed basin from the Qing dynasty, where the more realistic central flower basket is referred to as the "Flower Basket Pattern". The Basket pattern shown in Figure 4.98B remains intricate, with the features of the basket pronounced. However, based on analysis, referring to the "basket" on the lion dance mask as the "basket pattern" is inaccurate. As illustrated in C and D, the outline of the basket is three-dimensional, composed of other decorations rather than traditionally drawn basket patterns. On the lion dance mask, the basket does not contain flowers, but rather, it displays the name of the lion dance troupe (detailed explanation in Section 4.3.3.v.e). Hence, this study suggests that the basket on the lion mask can be viewed as an embellishment rather than a traditional motif.

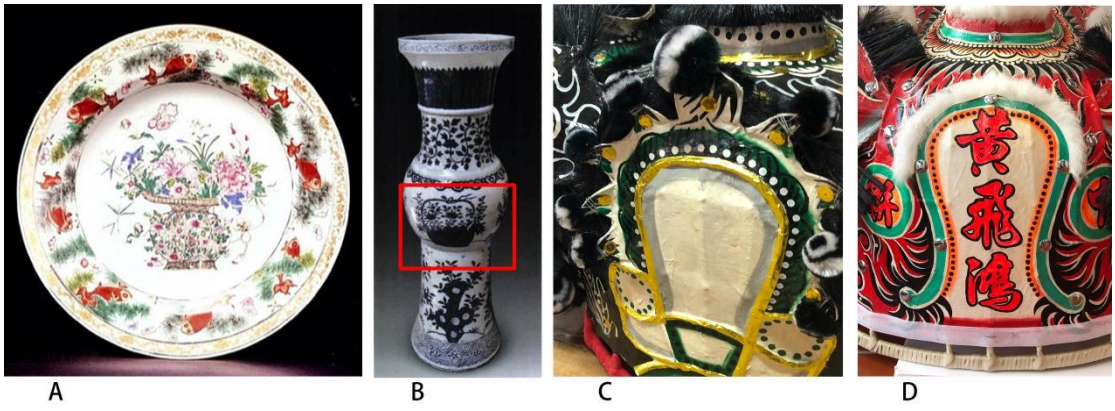


Figure 4.112: Flower Basket Patterns. A: Famille rose basket and algae pattern rimmed basin from the Qing dynasty's Qianlong period (Zhang, 2012); B: Ming dynasty Wanli blue and white porcelain with a basket pattern (Chen, 2006); C, D: Basket decoration on the lion dance mask (by Zhan, 2022).

The Fire Pattern on the lion dance mask is prevalent today. However, through analysis, it was not among the earliest patterns to appear on the mask. The origin of the traditional Fire Pattern on is discussed in Section 4.3.5.iii. During field observations, the Fire Pattern predominantly appeared on the Heshan-style lions made in Malaysia, Foshan-style lions influenced by Malaysia Lions, or innovative lions influenced by the Malaysian style. Based on findings, when the flame pattern is used on the lion mask, there are no traces of the scroll pattern. Previously mentioned, the scroll pattern symbolizes flowing hair. Though the flame pattern signifies "illumination and exorcism", its design is somewhat similar to the scroll pattern (Figure 4.113). Integrating historical records, interviews, and field research, it is inferred that the emergence of the flame pattern stemmed from innovative designs in Malaysia. Once these flame-patterned lion masks became public, they gained widespread appreciation and gradually became the mainstream decorative pattern for lion dance masks.

From the literature, some scholars mentioned a “tadpole pattern” when discussing the extraction of visual elements from the lion dance. However, there was no corresponding illustration in their work, and no traces of the “tadpole pattern” were found during interviews and field studies. Thus, this study believes that this is a “misdescription”.



Figure 4.113: Fire Patterns in Foshan Lion Mask (by Zhan, 2022)

Table 4.9 also reveals some controversies regarding the colour of the lion mask representing the character Liu Bei. Analysis suggests that it is improbable for the Liu Bei lion to have a white base. Watford (2019) stated that even in the outskirts of the U.S., local lion dance troupes rarely use excessive white in their mask decorations due to its association with “grief, funerals, and mourning”. Correspondingly, the character associated with a white base is Ma Chao. Although Ma Chao is portrayed as a warrior in the hero stories, it still implies tragedy. Liu Bei, being an emperor, is an auspicious character. Even though in Cantonese opera, his character’s facial makeup doesn’t use yellow, in the context of lion dance masks, yellow represents “wealth and imperial power”. Based on fieldwork, no Liu Bei lion with a white “base colour” was found in any lion factory, museum, or studio. Hence, the literature presented in the table may not be objective.

This section discussed the “comparison of research analysis results with the

literature". The purpose is to ensure the accuracy of constructing a "comprehensive data framework for visual elements of the lion dance mask". As evident, in the study of visual elements related to lion dance, there exists a substantial amount of ambiguous or even inaccurate information, which negatively impacts the dissemination and research of lion dance culture.

4.4.1.2 Discrepancies between Analysis Results and Interviewees' Descriptions

In this study, interviews play a pivotal role. Through these interactions, not only was firsthand data information acquired, but it also afforded the researcher a more comprehensive understanding of the lion dance masks. The participants primarily consisted of master craftsmen specializing in the fabrication of lion masks and seasoned lion dance performers. Consequently, insights into the history of the lion dance masks, their current developmental status, creative thought processes, client requirements, and market fluctuations were gleaned from their responses.

Table 4.10: Relationship between Analysis Outcomes and Interview Contents

	Interview Content	**Analytical Results**
History	interviewee have an understanding of the regional history of the "lion dance mask".	The "Awakening Lion" has its origins in the Northern lion and is a variant of the Southern lion.
Attributes	interviewee C, J: Stress the importance of adhering to traditional design. interviewee A, B, D, E, F: Advocate for designs that cater to customer demands. interviewee G, H, I, K: Believe that designs should meet competition criteria.	The primary symbolism of the Awakening Lion pertains to auspiciousness, with attributes connected to warding off evil spirits and dispelling negative energies. Emotional expressions ranging from joy and anger to sorrow and happiness are articulated through its dance movements. Extension of symbolic

Table 4.10 continued

Shape	interviewee C, J: Stress the importance of adhering to traditional design. interviewee A, B, D, E, F: Advocate for designs that cater to customer demands. interviewee G, H, I, K: Believe that designs should meet competition criteria.	There exists a diversity in the morphology of the Awakening Lion. Preserving tradition fortifies the foundational roots of the culture, while aligning with competition criteria resonates with the evolving demands of the era. Designs catering to audience aesthetics serve as a conduit to broaden cultural horizons.
Colour	interviewee B, E, D, K: Possess ambiguous concepts regarding colour usage. interviewee C, J: Emphasize the importance of respecting traditions. interviewee A, F, G, H, I: Value adhering to market trends and demands.	Documented references on colour are predominantly descriptive, lacking empirical visual evidences. While traditional colours possess intrinsic meanings, their depth and richness might be limited. Modern colours, though rooted in these traditional significances, are expanded upon, incorporating regional preferences and audience inclinations.
Pattern	interviewee C, J: Insist that patterns strictly comply with tradition. interviewee A, D, E, F, K: Think that as long as patterns symbolize good fortune, they are appropriate. interviewee B, G, H, I: Believe there is a need for innovation in patterns.	Clear nomenclature for patterns is imperative; the accurate utilization of traditional Chinese patterns ensures an authentic cultural representation. Patterns symbolizing auspiciousness not only foster consumer inclination to purchase but also stimulate cultural evolution. The innovation of these patterns underscores a trajectory towards developmental exploration.
Decoration	interviewee A-K: All concur that decorations should be aligned with tradition. interviewee A-K: Emphasize that aesthetics should be taken into consideration when decorating.	The decor of the Awakening Lion mask is predominantly influenced by Cantonese opera costumes. However, with the evolution of aesthetic preferences, the diversity in colours and designs has expanded. Fundamental elements such as fur, lion's mirror, pompons, and floral baskets are indispensable. Yet, variations in design and quantity can be subjected to slight modifications.

Table 4.10 continued

Development	interviewee A-K: Visual elements should ideally represent auspiciousness. interviewee A-K: Highlight the need for innovation in visual elements. interviewee A-K: Stress the significance of policy support for the lion dance mask's growth and development.	The potential for development in the visual elements of the Awakening Lion is vast. There's a need to align with customer requirements, retain the traditional symbolism of auspiciousness, extend the derivations of these auspicious symbols, and leverage governmental promotional efforts.

As evident from Table 4.10, interviewee exhibited knowledge about the history, attributes, form, colour, patterns, decorations, and evolution of the lion dance masks. All interviewees were well-versed in the origin of lion dances in their respective regions, but discrepancies in understanding other facets persisted. Some interviewee viewed the lion as an emblem of auspiciousness. In reality, not all lion masks symbolize good fortune. Different masks have varying symbolic meanings: for instance, Zhang Fei represents "impulsiveness and aggression", while Ma Chao embodies "loyalty and righteousness". Craftsmen with an awareness of these attributes exercise caution to eschew negative connotations in innovative mask designs.

Interviewees' opinions varied concerning the physical aesthetics of the lion masks. There exists a strong correlation between a craftsman's perception of the mask's design and their understanding of its character. The researcher believes that while upholding traditional culture, it is essential not to stagnate by resisting explorations into innovative designs. Conversely, relentless pursuit of innovation at the expense of cultural significance is equally detrimental. Standardizing lion masks for competitions, given the centrality of the mask to the performance, is understandable. However, imposing a singular criterion for

“traditional craftsmanship” is not a commendable approach.

The influx of foreign cultures has muddled the statistics on lion mask colours. Opinions diverged concerning the use of colours. Some interviewees believed in accommodating clients’ requests, while others stressed the importance of enlightening clients about traditional colour significances. Others yet opined that whatever is popular in the market sets the trend. Comprehensive interviews reveal potential ambiguities in role identification if mask designs deviate too far from traditional aesthetics. Adhering strictly to traditional colour schemes, especially in the face of new materials and palettes, risks diminishing customer interest. Respecting and extending traditional designs ensure the positive evolution of lion mask designs.

Most interviewee concurred that the patterns on the lion masks should epitomize “prosperity and auspiciousness. “However, innovation remains paramount. Some believe that lion mask patterns should reflect Chinese traditions, emphasizing that Chinese motifs generally symbolize auspiciousness. Analysis indicates that over time, these patterns have evolved, with changes primarily seen in variations of existing designs. Innovative designs, as long as they remain auspicious, are well-received by customers.

Interviewees unanimously believed that the decorations on the lion masks should aesthetically adhere to traditions. Analysis indicates that lion mask decorations are largely influenced by Cantonese opera costumes. But as aesthetic preferences evolve, so do the decorative elements. For instance, the colourful tassels on lion masks can be more vibrant compared to the typically bi-coloured tassels in opera headgears. Essential elements like fur, mirrors, tassels, and flower baskets remain integral, with variations adapting to the

requirements of the artist and the character. However, elements like rivets aren't mandatory, and vibrating tongues can be replaced by painted ones.

Analysis suggests ample room for evolution in the exterior design of lion masks. All interviewees highlighted the increased public interest post the Chinese government's initiative to "protect and develop intangible cultural heritage". Furthermore, with the increase in international lion dance competitions, lion dance culture has gained a robust foundation both domestically and internationally (Pan and Fan, 2023). Demand for lion masks has soared. Current buyers extend beyond lion dance troupes: many business owners display masks symbolizing "good luck, peace, and prosperity" in their shops, while enthusiasts add them to their collections. Capitalizing on this trend, craftsmen are innovating. For instance, Respondent B incorporated elements from a "Gold Lacquered Wood Carved Shrine" housed at the Guangdong Provincial Museum in their designs, introducing motifs like "Five Blessings come to home" and breaking away from conventional colour palettes, thereby expanding the realm of mask creation possibilities (Figure 4.114).

The above represents a discourse on the correlation between the feedback provided by interviewees and the outcomes of our research analysis. Through this discussion, we discern that artisans, lion dancers, and buyers play pivotal roles in the "Awakening Lion head" project. While interviews inherently contain subjective elements, the attitudes and perspectives of interviewees and buyers indeed exert a significant impact on the project's representation and evolution. In constructing a data framework for the visual elements of the "Awakening Lion head", attention must not only be accorded to information accuracy but also to providing guidance on potential developmental trajectories.



Figure 4.114: Lion Mask Designed with the Theme of "Gold Lacquered Wood Carved Shrine" (by Zhan ,2023)

4.4.2 Insights for Government Agencies, Traditional Culture Researchers, Art Creators and Industry Practitioners

This research meticulously delves into the visual symbols of the Guangdong Awakening Lion mask, with the ultimate aim of furnishing reliable support on the Awakening Lion head for government agencies, art creators, and researchers of traditional culture, thereby enhancing the propagation of Chinese culture.

In the context of today's globalized economy, cultural soft power is increasingly perceived as a reflection of a nation's comprehensive strength and a pivotal factor in asserting its dominant position and competitive edge on the international stage. The rich tapestry of Chinese traditional culture epitomizes China's soft power. Propagating Chinese culture abroad stands as a crucial lever in augmenting this soft power (Feng, 2021).

Local governmental initiatives, like Guangdong's "Cultural and Natural Heritage Day" series of events in May 2023, strive to raise public awareness about intangible

cultural heritage preservation, celebrate and perpetuate the essence of Chinese traditional culture, revel in the deep cultural foundations of the Lingnan region, and further the construction of a cultural bay area. The core tenet of these events, “preserve heritage while innovating”. This illustrates the government’s emphasis on striking a balance between preserving tradition and fostering innovation in cultural preservation.



Figure 4.115: Display of the “Fo, He-style” Awakening Lion Head (by Zhan, 2023)

Artisans have persistently been at the frontier of exploring the boundaries of Awakening Lion head design. Figure 4.115 shows an Awakening Lion head termed the “Fo, He-style” design. The master craftsman reveals that the design proportions are inspired by the Heshan Lion design, albeit with certain intricate adornments omitted. This ensures that lion dancers experience a sense of agility while performing. Nonetheless, the patterns used and the crafting of the lion’s mouth still retain the hallmark features of the Foshan lion design, hence the nomenclature “Fo, He-style”. Yet, this design was met with criticism, as the unique Foshan lion culture represented by the Foshan lion and the Heshan lion culture represented by the Heshan lion cannot be simplistically merged. This underscores the challenge in navigating the fine line between preserving tradition and endorsing innovation. Therefore, the establishment of a credible foundational database can

provide an researcheritative reference for the evolution and preservation of traditional culture.

A report released jointly by Baidu and People's Daily Research Institute, titled "Baidu 2021 National Pride Search Big Data", indicated a 528% surge in national pride-related searches over the past decade the burgeoning popularity of this "national trend" culture in China has catalyzed an explosive growth in related designs. Feng (2021) highlights the paramountcy of traditional culture as the bedrock of this design movement, emphasizing the imperative to resonate with the essence of traditional elements while concurrently preserving their core form. However, the realm of "design and art" has witnessed numerous instances of imprecise visual symbol representations within the Awakening Lion culture.



Figure 4.116：Designs of Awakening Lion； Left: Hanging Toothbrush Holder Design (Yin, 2018); Right: Guangzhou Awakening Lion Figurine Design (Huaban Oifficial Website, 2023)

The Awakening Lion head, known for its dynamic form, is deeply rooted in specific regional cultural traits. This design, due to its uniqueness and rich cultural background, has increasingly found its way into contemporary designs. Figure 4.116

presents an iteration of the Awakening Lion head, dominated by a stark white palette. On the left, one can see a toothbrush holder design suspended in air, while the right displays a figurine hailing from Guangzhou. In both designs, the lion head shape is not just recognizable but also prominently featured.

However, these designs reveal a significant oversight in colour selection. While the shape and design might be accurate and draw on tradition, the colour choice does not resonate with the cultural significance traditionally ascribed to the Awakening Lion. Analytical findings highlight a critical cultural context: in the lore of the Awakening Lion, a white-coloured lion head predominantly symbolizes “mourning”. Such a somber association makes the use of a white lion head for decorative items or toys not only a misrepresentation but also culturally insensitive. Incorporating this colour without understanding its implications can inadvertently convey a message that is starkly different from the intended cheerful or functional purpose of the items.

Upon a detailed analysis, it becomes evident that certain colours bear significant cultural and symbolic meanings within the palette of the traditional Awakening Lion. Specifically, the colours white and blue hold particular importance when associated with the Ma Chao lion, a lion which stands as a symbol of filial piety. These colours distinctly represent sentiments of “mourning” and are commonly linked with “funerals”.



Figure 4.117: Awakening Lion Decoration in a Guangdong Restaurant (by Zhan, 2022)

Given this context, it's imperative for designers to be judicious when integrating the colour blue into the Awakening Lion mask designs. While contemporary and innovative designs might aim to challenge or deviate from traditional lion head representations, they must still be mindful of the historical and cultural implications. Overemphasis or thoughtless use of blue might inadvertently muddle the visual message, leading to potential misinterpretations by those familiar with the traditional symbolism. This confusion can be evidently observed in Figure 4.117, where the colour's application may not align with the viewer's traditional understanding.



Figure 4.118: Awakening Lion IP Design (Cultural Exhibition Site, Baidu Scholar, 2023)

Figure 4.118 portrays a sculpture based on the IP design of the Awakening Lion. Yet, discerning the visual elements of the Awakening Lion is challenging in this design. The proportions diverge from the traditional circular-within-square Awakening Lion design, the distinct features of the lion's eyes do not correspond with traditional lions, and prominent elements like the lion's nose and ears are absent. The colour combinations do not resonate with character traits, and patterns and decorations are lacking. This innovative design fails to aptly represent the visual elements of the Guangdong Awakening Lion, let alone the underlying symbolism.



Figure 4.119: "One King and Five Tiger Generals" Tea Cup Design (photographed at Intangible Heritage Workshop site, by Zhan, 2022)

Figure 4.119 presents one of the few design concepts that comprehensively understand the "Awakening Lion culture". The designer has apprenticed with artisans, acquiring a holistic understanding of the Awakening Lion head-making project. The design depicts the flat design of six Awakening Lion characters, "Liu, Guan, Zhang, Zhao, Ma, Huang", preserving significant cultural symbols in form, colour, patterns, and decorations. This design effectively conveys the cultural significance of the Awakening Lion head.

For traditional culture practitioners, comprehensive and accurate data are foundational for research. This ensures avoidance of misinformation and inaccuracies in the field and prompts them to be cautious and meticulous, thus precisely preserving cultural heritage. For artists, these research findings enable them to understand the norms of visual symbols in Awakening Lion head culture across different regions, comprehend their exact meanings, and pay close attention to information accuracy during the creative process, noting crucial details.

4.4.3 Significance of Constructing the Data Framework for Visual Symbols of Guangdong Lion Masks

In this section, supplementary analyses from the second phase are presented, and a comprehensive review is conducted through "Differences between Analysis Results and Documented Literature", "Discrepancies between Analysis Results and Interviewee Narratives" and "Implications for Government Agencies, Traditional Culture Researchers, Artists and Relevant Industry Practitioners".

Table 4.11: Summary of Visual Symbols of the Awakening Lion Head in Guangdong

	Foshan	**Guangzhou**	**Heshan**	**Suixi**
Shape	Double cheeks, almond-shaped nose, upturned large mouth, wind-catching ears, big eyes, and diverse lion horns, with proportions roughly adhering to a 1:1:1 ratio in length, width, and height. (4.3.3.2.i for details)	Consistent with Foshan (4.3.4.2.i for details)	Round cheeks, garlic nose, duck beak, wind-catching ears, bulging eyes, Fist horn, proportions roughly adhering to a 1:0.69:0.78 ratio in length, width, and height. (4.3.5.2.i for details)	Gather the best of each type. According to the international Dragon and Lion Association standards. (4.3.6.2.i for details)
Colour	Liu Bei: Yellow base with multicoloured patterns; Guan Gong: Red base with white patterns; Zhang Fei: Black base with white and blue patterns; Zhao Yun: Blue base with white and black patterns; MA Chao: White base with blue and black patterns. Huang Zhong: Yellow base with black and white patterns. (4.3.3.2.ii for details)	Production is almost consistent with Foshan; Prefer black. (4.3.4.2.ii for details)	Seven colours (4.3.5.2.ii for details)	The colour is similar t o Foshan Lion, but the colour proportion is different. (4.3.6.2.ii for details)

Table 4.11 continued

Pattern	Curled Grass Pattern; Water Patterns; Hui patterns; Beaded Patterns. (4.3.3.2.iii for details)	Consistent with Foshan (4.3.4.2.iii for details)	Pore pattern, cat whisker pattern, Curled Grass Pattern, feather pattern, Bat Pattern, lotus stem pattern, Tiger Pattern, Fish Pattern, character pattern; (4.3.5.2.iii for details)	Curled Grass Pattern; Water Patterns; Hui patterns; Beaded Patterns; Pore lines, Tiger Pattern; More innovative patterns. (4.3.6.2.iii for details)
Decoration	Multiple pompons, single lion mirror, horsehair mane, tower incense, multiple rivets, flower basket. (4.3.3.2.iv for details)	Consistent with Foshan (4.3.4.2.iii for details)	Only two pompons, single lion mirror, black and white woolen hair are beard, tower incense, multiple rivets, flower basket (See 4.3.5.2.iv for details)	Multiple pompons, single lion mirror, horse mane/wool/rabbit hair/artificial hair, flower basket (See 4.3.6.2.iv for details)

Table 4.11 provides an informational listing of the visual symbols of the Guangdong "Awakening Lion head, serving as a concise summary of its data framework. Based on the analysis of this framework, the researcher reiterates the concept of the southern lion in this section, offering a clear definition to the sCurled Grass Patterns on the lion head, identifying the features of its variations, defining the spiral patterns on the lion head as "Water Patterns", refuting the label "Tadpole Patterns" and specifying the colour scheme rules of Liu Bei lion. Feedback from interviewees sheds light on the perceptions and attitudes of professionals involved in the making of "Awakening Lion" heads, as well as their insights into its current developmental state. The concluding insights underscore the pivotal importance of this research: in an era where intangible cultural heritage is highly valued, governmental agencies, traditional cultural researchers, and industry professionals

must possess accurate and comprehensive cultural data. This serves as a foundation to propel the positive progression of traditional cultures, ensuring their effective preservation and inheritance. Such studies offer invaluable references and guidance for the involved parties, helping them gain a profound understanding of the artistic and cultural attributes of the Awakening Lion head, along with its historical and cultural significance. Through this approach, we can not only foster a correct appreciation and respect for traditional cultures but also catalyze their innovation and development in contemporary society, allowing them to continuously shine on the global stage.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher initiates by unfolding an informational list of visual elements pertaining to the lion heads of Guangdong's Awakening Lion dance, subsequently delving into each visual element's encapsulated cultural and artisanal information through systematic image analysis. These 102 images not only showcase the morphology and style of the Guangdong "Awakening Lion" heads but also vividly portray the profound local culture and historical evolution they represent. Assisted by the comparative method, the visual characteristics and distinctions of lion heads across the four regions are lucidly displayed, offering readers an intuitive comprehension of the unique cultural attributes and artisanal heritages of these locales.

Theoretical analysis fortifies this research with robust academic backing. By aligning tangible image data with theoretical perspectives, the analysis becomes more intricate and comprehensive. This not only amplifies the research's scientific rigor but also bestows fresh perspectives and avenues for contemplation upon the study of Guangdong's

“Awakening Lion” heads. In the concluding phase of the analysis, the researcher synthesizes and encapsulates the visual symbols of the Guangdong “Awakening Lion” heads, endeavoring to present researchers, inheritors, and governmental entities with a cohesive data framework.

In summary, this chapter, harnessing image analysis, juxtaposes comparative and theoretical methodologies to conduct a progressive examination of the visual symbols of Guangdong’s “Awakening Lion” masks. Through this, a holistic and reliable data framework is constructed, accomplishing the triad of objectives set forth by this research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The lion dance, renowned for its grandeur and unique flair within the traditional culture of southern China, is adorned with its lion head, a visually distinctive feature. In an era that places emphasis on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and advocating for national soft power, there remains a significant research gap concerning the unique visual symbolism and cultural significance of the lion head. In this research, the researcher delves deeply into the visual symbols of the lion head, offering insights into its visual characteristics and the rich cultural heritage of Guangdong it embodies.

5.2 Key Findings

Initially, through literature reviews, interviews, and field studies, visual elements of lion head masks from Foshan, Guangzhou, Heshan, and Suixi were identified and categorized, achieving the first phase of the research objectives. Although lion head masks from these regions fall under the same umbrella, their visual elements exhibit vast differences, manifesting in aspects like shape, colour, patterns, and adornments.

Subsequently, employing image analyses, comparative studies, and theoretical assessments, it was discerned that the visual symbols of Guangdong's lion heads are deeply rooted in regional cultural nuances, evolving with shifts in socio-political landscapes, cultural contexts, historical trajectories, and aesthetic preferences. This phase's analytical endeavours accomplished the second set of research objectives. For instance, the lion heads from Foshan, a historic hub for craftsmanship and export, brim with martial arts

reverence—reflecting the spirit of Huang Feihong. The design of the "One King, Five Generals" lion head mask showcases the core Chinese values of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and bravery. Guangzhou Lion Heads, by contrast, share a parallel cultural heritage with Foshan, leading to significant visual similarities. However, subtle differences in colour preferences arise due to variations in ancestral hall cultures. Heshan's lion heads, interwoven with the local ethos of valuing harmony, also bear ties to the region's historical lion culture export and re-import. Today, the Heshan-originated "Heshan-style Lion" appears frequently on global stages with the visage of the "Malaysia Lion". Traditional Heshan lion culture, overshadowed by foreign influences, fades from popular consciousness. Yet, from another perspective, the "Heshan-style Lion" emerges with a renewed cultural identity, radiating fresh allure. Influenced by maritime culture, Suixi Lion Head masks are diverse in their visual elements, encapsulating the quintessence from local culture and the aforementioned regions. Currently, Suixi lion dance performances and mask-crafting techniques are in constant evolution, and thus the significance of their visual symbols continuously shifts. Consequently, while this research captures past interpretations, its methodologies offer invaluable guidance for future studies in this realm.

Lastly, in the final phase of the research, all analysed data was aggregated. Comparisons were drawn between analysed outcomes, literature resources, and interviewees' perceptions to rectify and supplement missing or incomplete information. By integrating insights from governments, researchers, and artistic creators, the importance of ensuring accurate inheritance and protection of intangible cultural heritages was accentuated. The study culminated in the creation of a comprehensive and reliable framework detailing the visual symbols of Guangdong's lion head masks, achieving the final set research objectives.

5.3 Significance

The lion dance, emblematic of the Lingnan culture, transcends its role as merely a visual symbol to become a cultural emblem. It epitomizes the sociocultural nuances and the evolution of traditional crafts of southern China. A deep exploration into the visual symbols of the lion head allows us to trace the intricate linkages between ancient traditional arts and contemporary visual culture. The significance of such an inquiry is self-evident.

From an academic perspective, studying the visual symbols of the lion dance head effectively broadens the interdisciplinary realm bridging traditional crafts and modern visual culture. Such a study not only enriches our understanding of the Lingnan culture but also unveils the underlying sociocultural dynamics. Furthermore, every minutia of the lion head, be it material, colour, or form, encapsulates a wealth of cultural information and stands as a testament to the wisdom and craftsmanship of ancient artisans. In practical terms, this research provides a foundational theory for successors, artists, designers, and professionals in the creative industries, guiding their creative endeavours. By constructing a comprehensive data framework, these practitioners can delve deeper into the essence and cultural implications of the lion head culture, furnishing a robust theoretical foundation for its preservation, promotion, and evolution. This not only facilitates the perpetuation of the lion head culture but also paves the way for its integration with modern design and art.

Additionally, the outcomes of this study hold paramount guidance value for governmental cultural bodies and cultural preservationists. Armed with the insights from this research, they can formulate more scientific and judicious cultural preservation policies and measures, ensuring the appropriate safeguarding and inheritance of the lion

head culture.

5.4 Recommendations and Suggestions

In contemporary society, while the craft of lion head fabrication in the lion dance has been honourably inscribed on the list of intangible cultural heritage, its associated literature and craft integrity still face formidable challenges. Historically, much of this craft relied on oral transmission, and scant documentary evidence coupled with invaluable traditional craftsmanship has not received due regard or proper preservation. This oversight not only results in a loss of connection to the past but also raises the alarming possibility of the craft becoming extinct in the future.

Governments and official cultural institutions, as stewards and representatives of a nation's culture, bear a unique responsibility and obligation. To better protect and promote the lion dance head culture, I propose several recommendations. Firstly, governments should introduce legislation to offer robust legal protection to the lion dance head culture, ensuring this intangible heritage's continuity and preventing potential discontinuities or complete loss. Secondly, an official, standardized system for document submission and storage should be established, encouraging inheritors and craftsmen to document and submit information, supported by sufficient funding. Thirdly, incorporating lion dance head culture into the school curriculum could enable younger generations to better understand, appreciate, and perpetuate this traditional art. Fourthly, hosting exhibitions, festivals, and exchange activities related to the lion dance would elevate its public awareness and significance. Fifthly, scholars and research institutions should be encouraged to delve deep into lion dance culture, systematically collecting, organizing, and preserving literature, artefacts, and multimedia resources, enriching research resources for

future generations. Sixthly, showcasing the allure of the lion dance head on international platforms could attract foreign researchers and enthusiasts, while simultaneously adopting successful overseas experiences and methods in cultural preservation.

In modern society, to ensure the continuous prosperity and rejuvenation of the Guangdong lion dance head culture, protection and promotion alone are insufficient. It is imperative to explore innovative paths for its development. The amalgamation of digital technology with traditional culture offers vast platforms and possibilities. Digital technology, for one, has pioneered a novel interactive experience for the lion dance culture. AR and VR technologies within intangible heritage museums can immerse visitors in a vivid world of lion dance, allowing not just an appreciation of splendid performances but also a deeper understanding of each crafting detail and its cultural significance, offering an unparalleled immersive experience.

Furthermore, establishing digital archives is an essential method for the long-term preservation of traditional culture. Encouraging more inheritors and relevant professionals to engage in digital data collection, meticulously recording every aspect of the lion dance head's creation process, material selection, and craftsmanship transmission, not only equips academic research with invaluable data but also provides a plethora of resources for future innovations and designs. Worth noting is that the evolution of traditional culture must keep pace with contemporary trends. Innovation and design play a pivotal role in this context. Artists, designers, and cultural institutions, leveraging the comprehensive data framework presented in this research, can merge modern aesthetics and demands in their creations. Such creative designs, grounded in authentic, extensive data, not only help to preserve and propagate the traditional culture of the lion dance head but also cater to the

diverse cultural product demands of modern society.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

In light of the foregoing, regarding the preservation and evolution of lion dance head culture, it is imperative that we adopt a multifaceted perspective, engaging in comprehensive and in-depth discussions and strategic implementations to ensure the continuity and elevation of this invaluable cultural heritage.

The lion dance, a prominent symbol of Lingnan culture, is more than just a performative art form; it embodies the profound sentiments and aspirations people hold for "auspiciousness and peace". Analysing the visual symbols of the lion dance head not only aids in unravelling the socio-cultural tapestry of southern China but also bears unique value concerning the historical evolution and transmission of traditional crafts. Furthermore, in this study, we have integrated the theoretical framework of Western semiotics, delving deep into the visual symbols of Guangdong lion dance heads. The application of this methodology not only substantiates its empirical relevance in researching Chinese traditional culture but also provides robust theoretical scaffolding for subsequent research endeavours.

Looking towards future research directions, the researcher aims to build upon the current findings, venturing into in-depth exploration of other traditional cultural visual symbols, striving to enhance the academic comprehension of Chinese traditional cultural visual symbols. Ultimately, we aspire to construct a comprehensive visual symbol system for Chinese traditional crafts and fine arts, thereby contributing to the protection, transmission, and global promotion and recognition of Chinese traditional culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Journal Publications

1. **Zhan, S.,** and Wan Abdullah Thani, W. J. I. (2023). Embracing traditions and innovations of Suixi Lion Heads in Lion Dance performances in China. *International Journal of Applied and Creative Arts, 6*(1), 65-90. https://doi.org/10.33736/ijaca.5663.2023.
2. **Zhan, S.,** & Abdullah, W. J. I. B. W. (2024). Conveying Spirit Through Form: An Exploration on the Shape Symbols of Foshan Awakening Lion Head. A*rt and Society, 3*(1), 89-100.

Appendix B: The semi-structured interview question design

Level	No.	Interview questions	Design purpose
Scenarios embedding	1	Do you know the historical origins of Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan lion mask?	Guide the interviewee into the research scenario to enhance credibility.
	2	What is the current situation of Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan Lion Head Craftsmanship?	
	3	When do Awakening Lion dance performances typically take place in Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan?	
	4	Are people from other regions familiar with Suixi Awakening Lion masks?	
Core content	5	What is the production process for the lion head mask?	Guide the interviewee to accurately express the characteristics of each visual element, ensuring the data's precision and specificity.
	6	Both Suixi lion masks and Foshan lion masks are used for Awakening Lion dance performance. What are the differences between them?	
	7	What are the characteristics of the design of Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan lion masks? Why do they have such a design?	
	8	Does the design of lion head masks relate to their performance? How are they related?	
	9	What are the characteristics and significance of the colours used in Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan lion masks?	
	10	Are there any special decorations and patterns on Suixi lion masks	
	11	Are there any particular considerations for innovative patterns？	
Development exploration	12	Is the Awakening Lion mask popular locally?	Prompt the interviewee to identify issues during the interview process.
	13	Do teenagers like Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan lion masks?	
	14	What is the most popular lion head style now? What are its characteristics?	
	15	Do you think it is necessary to develop cultural and creative activities related to lion heads?	
	16	In your opinion, does "innovation" impact traditional lion head masks or promote their development?	
	17	Has the government provided good policies for protecting Foshan / Guangzhou / Suixi / Heshan Lion Heads?	

Appendix C: Keyword List of Foshan Lion Head Visual Elements

Shape	Characteristics	Cheek	Double cheeks	Traditional type	
				Unique	
			decorated by fish in some design	Develop direction	
		Nose	Big nose, big nostrils, with nasal hair, shaped like garlic		
		Mouth	Large opening, arched upper lips, three-dimensional teeth		
		Ears	Zhang Fei lion	Broken ears	Militant
		Eyes	Guang gong lion	Silkworm brows, phoenix eyes	Unique
					Dignified
		Horn	Dragon Horn	King	Power, treasure
			Huge legendary turtle Horn	Ancient divine beast	Success
			Fist Horn	Fist sounds like “quan”	Power
			Bamboo Shoot Horn	Stainless steel, Sharp	Militant
			Long Curved Horn	Huang Zhong lion	Honest and tolerant
			Eagle Horn	General	Bold and powerful
	Size	Dimensions	There are different sizes	Hand made, each lion head has subtle differences	
		Proportion	Square and upright	Almost the same length, width, and height	
	Attributes	Job position			
		Generation	The younger generation		
			The older generation		
		Style characteristics			
		Understanding of lion head characters			
	Relationship	Belief	Handicrafter	Customer Demand	
		Preference	Buyers	Customer Demand	
Colour	Traditional	Icon	Yellow: golden, Red: Fire, Black: dark night, Green/Cyan: nature in general		
		Index	Yellow: treasure, Red: Angry, Black: visual information, Green/Cyan: Green plant		
		Symbol	Yellow: Rich/Power/King, Red: good fortune/prosperity, Black: Brave/Power, Green/Cyan: Undefeated, Blue: Funeral/Sadness		
	Modern	Icon	Yellow: golden, Red: Fire, Black: dark night, Green/Cyan: nature in general, Blue: sea, White: Snow, Pink: Cute/Soft/Romantic, Fluorescent colour: Shine		
		Index	Yellow: Sun/Sunshine/Gold, Red: Hot, Black: ban sign, Green/Cyan: fresh things, Blue: good weather, White: Clean, Pink: Shyness/blushing, Fluorescent colour: bright light		
		Symbol	Yellow: Happiness/Hope/Money, Red: Good fortune/prosperity, Black: Misfortune/Bad luck, Green/Cyan: health/Jealousy, Blue: Honourable, White: Pure/Tidy/Death, Pink: Female/feminization, Fluorescent colour: Cool and dazzling		
	Attributes	Innovation should carry auspicious meanings			Develop direction
	Relationship	According to customer’s preferences or requests			Develop direction
		Customer don’t pay much attention			Develop direction
Pattern	Traditional	Icon	Tang Grass Pattern, Guan Dao Pattern, Lianzhu Pattern, Fire Pattern, Hui Pattern, Dragon Pattern, Water Pattern		
		Index	Tang Grass Pattern: Lion’s hair, Guan Dao Pattern: Long-handled sword for fighting on horseback, Lianzhu Pattern: A string of beads/Sun, Fire Pattern: Fire, Hui Pattern: Chinese character 回, Dragon Pattern：Dragon, Water Pattern：Water		
		Symbol	Tang Grass Pattern：A ferocious aura, Guan Dao Pattern: Undefeated, Phoenix Tail Pattern：Auspicious and beautiful, Fire Pattern: Exorcise evil spirits, Hui Pattern: Perfect, Dragon Pattern：Power/Rich, Water Pattern：Rich		
	Modern	Icon	Five blessings come to the door, butterfly pattern, Ruyi pattern, Rats pattern, Silkworm pattern		

		Index	Five blessings come to the door: Bats, Butterfly pattern: Butterfly, Rui pattern: A sceptre with a head like a cloud and a Ganoderma lucidum, Silkworm pattern: Silkworm		
		Symbol	Five blessings come to the door: Blessing, Butterfly pattern: Beautiful, Ruyi pattern: Satisfy, Silkworm pattern: Diligent/dedicated		
	Attributes	Inheritor of Skill	We do theme creation		Develop direction
		Relationship	Auspicious patterns can be painted on the lion head masks based on customer requests.		Develop direction
Deco-ration	Hair, Beard	Traditional	Toothbrush mustache	Black or white	
		Modern	Woolen	Colourful	
	Tongue	Traditional	Vibrate		
		Modern	Draw /Vibrate		
	Pompon	Cantonese Opera	The Colours of Cantonese Opera Facial Makeup	colourful, depend on preference	
				depends on characters	
	Rivet	Icon	Rivet		
		Index	Reflective point		
		Symbol	Coin, Money		
	Basket	White the performance team's name/Creator's name/Village'name/Company's name			
		A three-dimensional decorative line			
	Mirror	Traditional lion has one mirror. The East Sea lion has three mirrors.		Important, demon-reflecting mirror, used for warding off evil.	
	Attributes	Performer of lion dance	Too complex decorations are not suitable for dancing.		Develop direction
			Woolen lions are used for high-pole performances		
			Traditional lions are usually used for ground performance		
	Relation-ship	The patterns used are mainly auspicious symbols.			Develop direction
		Buyers like more decorations			Develop direction

Appendix D: Keyword List of Guangzhou Lion Head Visual Elements

Shape	Characteristics	Cheek	Round cheeks	From Heshan	
			Double cheeks	From Foshan	
		Ears	Zhang Fei lion	From Foshan	
		Nose	From Heshan/From Foshan		
		Mouth	From Heshan/From Foshan		
		Eyes	Guang gong lion	From Foshan	
		Horn	Dragon Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Huge legendary turtle Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Fist Horn	Common	From Heshan
			Bamboo Shoot Horn	Common	From Foshan
			Long Curved Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Eagle Horn	Rare	From Foshan
	Size	Dimensions	Foshan-style lion	Almost the same length, width, and height	
			Heshan-style lion	From Heshan	
		Proportion	Foshan-style lion	Square and upright	
			Heshan-style lion	From Heshan	
		Attributes	Job position	Performer of lion dance	
			Style characteristics		
			Understanding of lion head characters		Views by buyers
		Relationship	Belief	Handicrafter	Traditional
					Modern
			Preference	Buyers	Traditional
					Modern
Colour	Traditional	Icon	From Foshan		
		Index	From Foshan		
		Symbol	From Foshan	Black: Black in Taoism represents water, and water is wealth.	
	Modern	Icon	From Foshan	Customer Demand	
		Index	From Foshan	Customer Demand	
		Symbol	From Foshan	Customer Demand	
	Attributes	Innovation should carry auspicious meanings			From Foshan
	Relationship	According to customer's preferences or requests			From Foshan
		Customer don't pay much attention			From Foshan
Pattern	Traditional	Icon	From Foshan		
		Index	From Foshan		
		Symbol	From Foshan		
	Modern	Icon	From Foshan		
		Index	From Foshan		
		Symbol	From Foshan		
	Attributes	Inheritor of Skill	From Foshan		
		Relationship	Auspicious patterns	From Foshan	
Deco-ration	Hair, Beard	Traditional	Black or white toothbrush mustache	From Foshan	
		Modern	Colourful woolen	From Heshan	
	Tongue	Traditional	Vibrate	From Foshan	
		Modern	Draw /Vibrate	From Heshan/From Foshan	
	Pompon	Cantonese Opera	From Foshan		
	Rivet	Traditional	From Foshan		

		Modern	Customer Demand	
	Basket	Style	From Foshan	
		Character	Customer Demand	
	Mirror	From Foshan		
	Others	From Foshan		
	Attributes	Performer of lion dance	To make the dancing more convenient, the design needs to be simpler.	
			Dancing with traditional lion head is welcome.	
	Relationship	The patterns used are mainly auspicious symbols.		Develop direction

Appendix E: Keyword List of Heshan Lion Head Visual Elements

Shape	Characteristics	Cheek	Round cheeks	Traditional type	
				Unique	
		Nose	The shape is different from Foshan-style lion		
		Mouth	looks like a duck's bill, it's flat		
		Ears	Zhang Fei lion	Broken ears	From Foshan
		Eyes	The shape is different from Foshan-style lion		
		Horn	Fist Horn	Fist sounds like "quan"	Power
			Bamboo Shoot Horn	Sharp	From Foshan
	Size	Dimensions	Hand made	Passed down from generation to generation	
		Proportion	Looking from the front, it's narrower, while from the side it's longer.		
		Attributes	Job position	Performer of lion dance	
				Inheritor of Skill	
			Generation	The younger generation	
				The older generation	
			Understanding of lion head characters		
		Relationship	Belief	Handicrafter	Customer Demand
			Preference	Buyers	Customer Demand
			Feedback from Malaysia lion		Customer Demand
Colour	Traditional	Icon	Seven colours: Various colours, Black: Decorative use only		
		Index	Seven colours: Everything		
		Symbol	Seven colour: Perfect, Black: Misfortune/Bad luck		
	Modern	Icon	The same as traditional colour.		
		Index	The same as traditional colour.		
		Symbol	The same as traditional colour, Fluorescent colour: Cool and dazzling		
	Attributes	Innovation should carry auspicious meanings			Develop direction
	Relationship	According to customer's preferences or requests			Develop direction
		Feedback from Malaysia lion			Develop direction
Pattern	Traditional	Icon	Tang Grass Pattern, Guan Dao Pattern, Lianzhu Pattern, Phoenix Tail Pattern, Fire Pattern, Hui Pattern, Water Pattern, Bat patterns,		From Foshan
			Lotus pod patterns, feather patterns, Ruyi Pattern, Cat whisker patterns, tiger stripe patterns.		Develop direction
		Index	Lotus pod patterns: Lotus, feather patterns: Feather, Ruyi Pattern: A scepter with a head like a cloud and a Ganoderma lucidum, Cat whisker patterns: cat's pores, Bat patterns: Bat, Tiger stripe patterns: Tiger stripe.		
		Symbol	Lotus pod patterns: Sacred and wealthy, feather patterns: Lively, Ruyi Pattern: Satisfy, Bat patterns: Blessing, Tiger stripe patterns: Firce.		
	Modern	Icon	The same as traditional pattern. Characters: "loyalty", "righteousness", "benevolence", "bravery"		
		Index	The same as traditional pattern. Characters: Brave hero		
		Symbol	Characters: "Red Rabbit and Green Dragon are also helpers, the brave hero who broke through the gates and slew the generals", this poem describes Guan Yu's bravery, and "Hero" is the name of the lion team.		
	Attributes	Inheritor of Skill	We do theme creation		Develop direction
			Feedback from Malaysia lion		Develop direction
		Relationship	Auspicious patterns can be painted on the lion head masks based on customer		Develop direction

			requests.		
Deco-ration	Hair, Beard	Traditional	Woolen	Black or white	
		Modern	Woolen	Colourful	
	Tongue	Traditional	Draw		
		Modern	The same as traditional tongue, but sometimes it can be 3D.		
	Pompon	Cantonese Opera	From Foshan		
	Rivet	From Foshan			
	Basket	From Foshan			
	Mirror	From Foshan			
	Others	Incense Towers			From Foshan
	Attributes	Performer of lion dance	Too complex decorations are not suitable for dancing.		Develop direction
			Woolen lions are used for high-pole performances		
			Due to competition needs, Heshan Lion Heads are also improving.		
	Relationship	The patterns used are mainly auspicious symbols.			Develop direction
		Buyers like more decorations, Malaysia lion			Develop direction

Appendix F: Keyword List of Suixi Lion Head Visual Elements

Shape	Characteristics	Cheek	Round cheeks	From Heshan	
				From Foshan	
		Ears	Zhang Fei lion	From Foshan	
		Eyes	Guang gong lion	The same as other charactors	
		Nose	From Heshan/From Foshan		
		Mouth	From Heshan/From Foshan		
		Horn	Dragon Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Huge legendary turtle Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Fist Horn	Common	From Heshan
			Bamboo Shoot Horn	Common	From Foshan
			Long Curved Horn	Rare	From Foshan
			Eagle Horn	Rare	From Foshan
	Size	Dimensions	Traditional	Ddetermined by the previous inheritors.	
			Modern	The official sstandard size was formulated by Suixi Lion Head workshop.	
		Proportion	Foshan-style lion	Almost the same length, width, and height	
			Heshan-style lion	Date from uixi lion head workshop	
		Attributes	Job position	Inheritor of Skills	
			Style characteristics		
			Understanding of lion head characters	Customer Demand	
		Relationship	Belief	Handicrafter	Customer Demand
			Preference	Buyers	Customer Demand
Colour	Traditional	Icon	From Foshan		
		Index	From Foshan		
		Symbol	From Foshan		
	Modern	Icon	From Foshan		Customer Demand
		Index	From Foshan		Customer Demand
		Symbol	From Foshan		Customer Demand
	Attributes	Innovation should carry auspicious meanings		Customer Demand	Develop direction
		Colourful, Bright colour			
	Relationship	According to customer's preferences or requests			Develop direction
		Customer don't pay much attention			Develop direction
Pattern	Traditional	Icon	From Foshan		
		Index	From Foshan		
		Symbol	From Foshan		
	Modern	Icon	Carp pattern, Landscape painting pattern		
		Index	Carp pattern: Fish（余, pronounced as "yu" in Chinese, which sounds similar to the word "fish", Landscape painting pattern: A good view		
		Symbol	Carp pattern: Residue, Landscape painting pattern: Vigorous atmosphere		
	Attributes	Inheritor of Skill	We do theme creation , modify traditional patterns		Develop direction
		Relationship	People prefer patterns that symbolize good fortune		Develop direction

Decoration	Hair, Beard	Traditional	Toothbrush mustache	Black or white	
		Modern	Woolen	colourful	
	Tongue Pompon	Traditional	Vibrate	From Foshan	
		Modern	Draw /Vibrate		
		Cantonese Opera		From Foshan	
	Rivet	Traditional	From Foshan		
		Modern	Customer Demand		
	Basket	Style	From Foshan		
		Character	Customer Demand		
	Mirror	From Foshan			
	Attributes	Performer of lion dance	Too many decorations would be inconvenient.	Develop direction	
			Leaping and executing difficult moves while it's heavy		
	Relationship	Association establish standards for the props used in competitions to ensure fairness		Develop direction	
		We make improvements based on customer feedback		Develop direction	

Appendix G: Suixi lion mask model (Data provided by Suixi Lion Culture Museum)

Suixi lion mask model	Model	Size (L.W.H) (cm)	Frame circumference diameter (cm)
Traditional Foshan-style lion mask	No. 2	80×73×72	145
Modified Foshan-style lion mask	No. 3 +	80×70×65	137
Modified Foshan-style lion mask	No. 3 mid	75×65×62	135
Modified Foshan-style lion mask	No. 3 -	75×63×61	130
Modified Foshan-style lion mask	No. 4	68×60×57	125
Modified Foshan-style lion mask	No. 5	60×55×55	110
Modified Foshan-style lion mask （for kids）	No. 6	55×55×48	90
Traditional Heshan-style lion mask		88×70×65	
Modified Heshan-style lion mask	No. 3 +	88×70×65	137
Modified Heshan-style lion mask	No. 3 mid	85×65×60	135
Modified Heshan-style lion mask	No. 4	75×60×57	125
Modified Heshan-style lion mask	No. 6	68×45×45	90