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An analysis of the aesthetic characteristics of the Guangxi folk tale "The Legend of Mazu"

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Abstract:
The Mazu belief is prevalent along the southeastern coast of China and has significant influence both domestically and internationally. In Guangxi, this tradition dates back to the Ming and Qing dynasties and has integrated with local cultural elements to form a unique belief system. The Mazu Festival, held once every three years, showcases distinct characteristics in the portrayal of Mazu and related objects. These distinctions are evident in clothing, body shaping, and line expression, all of which reflect the local aesthetics of Guangxi. Summarizing the aesthetic features of this tradition can be effectively applied to the expression of regional artworks.

Keywords:
Mazu belief; aesthetic presentation; regional characteristics

1. Introduction

Mazu beliefs and customs are relatively popular in the southeastern coastal areas and are involved both at home and abroad. This belief and custom of Mazu in Guangxi can be traced back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It combines with the regional culture of Guangxi to form a unique belief concept. Mazu Festival is held once every three years. The representation of Mazu and related objects is different from other regions. The clothing, body shaping, and line expression all have Guangxi's local characteristics. Summarizing its aesthetic characteristics can be well applied to the expression of regional works.

2.Guangxi Mazu beliefs and customs

Mazu is a figure from the Five Dynasties period. Her original name was Lin Mo. She is the god of sea protection. Her introduction to Guangxi can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty. Guangxi is close to the Pearl River in Guangdong and other places, with convenient water and land transportation and developed water transportation trunk lines. Due to its dangerous terrain and rapid water flow, the belief and custom of Mazu was also brought to Guangxi, and gradually evolved into the god of river protection, river protection and local protection.

It is recorded in the "Xunzhou Prefecture Chronicle" of Guixian County, Guigang City: "The worship of the Queen of Heaven has been around for a long time. When I was a child, the temple looked majestic... The

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miracles are so remarkable that they cannot be described..." The city was invaded, and the people were exiled. However, it was difficult for people to recover from danger and restore order. Gai Tian regretted the disaster, and later used his ability to prevent disasters. The way of heaven's praise is appropriate! "The withdrawal of troops from Guixian by the Taiping Rebellion is attributed to Mazu, so Mazu also has the ability to resolve disasters and turn danger into safety in Guangxi. In Guangxi, Mazu beliefs and customs gradually add local characteristics and form unique cultural characteristics.

3.The expression of Guangxi Mazu beliefs and customs in art

As the core character of the story, Mazu's image is richly displayed in the painting. Paintings will depict Mazu's dignity, compassion and majesty, as well as her image in traditional clothing and holding magical objects or sacred objects. These depictions are intended to highlight Mazu's sacred status and her image as a protector of the sea. Symbolic meanings are given in artistic expressions, such as her headdress, clothing, and objects held in her hands, which all contain specific symbolic elements to express Mazu's character and power. The contents include Mazu appearing to rescue shipwrecks, subduing monsters, curing diseases and rescuing people, etc. These scenes will be vividly and contagiously depicted in paintings. In terms of background environment, artists will also create the atmosphere and background in which the story takes place by depicting the ocean, ships, islands and other natural environments, so that the audience can better integrate into the story situation. While depicting the image and story scenes of Mazu, it will also deeply explore and interpret the cultural connotation contained in "The Legend of Mazu", including the historical origin of Mazu belief, the inheritance and development of Mazu culture, and the core value of Mazu spirit.

In Guangxi and China's coastal areas, the painting representations of "The Legend of Mazu" show diversity. Some works focus on realism and strive to accurately reproduce the image of Mazu and story scenes; some works pay more attention to freehand brushwork, expressing the artist's emotions and concepts through exaggeration and deformation. The painting style is also influenced by factors such as the regional culture and national characteristics of ethnic minorities, and takes the form of print paintings, land and water paintings, traditional Chinese paintings, sculptures and other forms of expression.

4.The aesthetic characteristics of Guangxi Mazu

4.1. Headgear and Attire

The Mazu bun is a very distinctive feature of Mazu costumes. It is made entirely of real hair, giving it a sail-shaped bun. On the left and right sides of the sail-shaped bun, there is a wavy hairpin, which symbolizes the oars on the ship. There is a round hairpin on the top of the head, which represents the rudder (steering wheel) of the ship. In the hairband, there is a red rope, which represents the cable on the ship. A silver hairpin runs horizontally through the hair, which symbolizes the anchor on the ship. The structural and symbolic elements of the entire headdress come together to imply smooth sailing.

In Mazu's dress, the top is a Chinese-style sea blue slanted top, and the sea blue symbolizes the sea. The pants are wide-leg straight pants with red upper and black stitching at the bottom. Red symbolizes auspicious-

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ness and joy, while black has many interpretations. One is that it symbolizes the longing for relatives at sea, and the other is that Mazu rescues fishermen at sea all year round, and her pants that are wet by the sea water look black from a distance. , and the upper part that was not wet was still red, and over time it evolved into the current style. Nowadays, Mazu's clothes enshrined in Mazu temples are mostly gorgeous, showing her noble temperament. However, when Mazujie is held on March 3 every year, it will still follow its traditional appearance and focus on reflecting its people-friendly feeling and natural state.

4.2. Physical characteristics

The body shaping characteristics of Mazu in Guangxi are based on her cultural and belief background. Although the specific shaping characteristics vary by region and artist, generally speaking, statues or portraits of Mazu will follow some common principles and characteristics.

Mazu's facial complexion is depicted as natural and delicate, reflecting her youthful and energetic qualities. This skin color choice stems from Mazu's image as a young goddess in folk beliefs. The eyebrows are described as "kind eyebrows", that is, the eyebrows are curved and soft, showing a feeling of kindness and kindness. There is a hint of heroism between the eyebrows, which reflects the majesty and power of Mazu as the patron saint of the sea. The eyes are depicted as deep and intelligent, symbolizing her insight and keen awareness of situations at sea. Their shape and size vary from artist to artist, but overall they convey Mazu's kindness and wisdom. The corners of the mouth are slightly raised, which is described as smiling, kind and warm, reflecting Mazu's kindness and care. The facial contour is rounded and soft, and the jawline is relatively clear, but overall it does not appear too rigid, in line with the image of Mazu as a female deity. In some works of art, Mazu wears some decorations on her face, such as earrings, hair accessories, etc., to increase her sacred and majestic temperament.

Mazu is often depicted in a standing posture, standing on a lotus throne, symbolizing her otherworldly status. Keep your feet together or slightly apart, and your posture will be upright, showing your dignity and stability. There are also some temples where Mazu is depicted in a seated posture, sitting on the rough waves, symbolizing her close connection with the ocean and her ability to protect it. Keep your body upright and place your hands on your knees or make other gestures of prayer or protection. Mazu's gestures are a very important part of her physical posture and have specific symbolic meanings. Common gestures include "holding the hut in the sky", that is, holding the hands together in an arch shape and holding the guihu tablet in the hand. Another common gesture is the "offering gesture", which is to hold objects upward with both hands to express dedication or prayer. Mazu also makes other gestures, such as the "Ruyi style" or the "Flat position", which are intended to express her compassion, care and protection.

The overall shape of Mazu is dignified and upright, which is consistent with the image of ladies in the Song Dynasty. The body proportions are coordinated, not too slender or thick, giving people a stable and generous feeling. The limbs are relatively slender and in harmony with the trunk. The arms droop naturally or make specific gestures, and the fingers are slender and powerful, reflecting the gentleness and strength of Mazu. Compared with the plump or petite female images in some cultures, Mazu's body proportions tend to be dignified and generous. Her image combines the characteristics of Guangxi's traditional culture and folk beliefs, becoming a unique cultural symbol.

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4.3. Line expression

In works of art related to Mazu, the use of lines pursues smoothness and grace to express the dignity and kindness of Mazu. The smoothness of the lines makes the image of Mazu more vivid, while also conveying a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere. Artists use delicate and delicate lines when depicting Mazu's face, headdress and other details. The fineness of these lines can accurately express the micro-expressions of the face, the decoration of the headdress, etc., making the image of Mazu more lifelike. However, the lines in clothing and movements are mainly rough. Although Mazu is depicted as a kind female image, the use of rough lines also reflects the sense of strength, which is reflected in Mazu's standing and sitting postures. Through the power of lines, artists were able to express the majesty and solemnity of Mazu as the patron saint of the sea.

The use of lines often also has symbolic meaning. For example, when depicting Mazu's clothing, the lines represent ocean elements such as waves and fish; when depicting Mazu's gestures, the lines represent emotions such as compassion and care. These symbolic meanings make the use of lines more connotative and profound.

4.4. Color rendering

Mazu art in coastal areas often uses traditional Chinese colors such as red, yellow and blue. These colors not only have profound cultural connotations, but also often carry specific symbolic meanings. In the ethnic minority areas of Guangxi, a certain amount of yellow is added to the red color, which matches well with the local ethnic minority colors, making the image of Mazu more simple and people-friendly, making it closer to the public. Red represents auspiciousness, joy and prosperity, while yellow symbolizes imperial power, dignity and sublimity. Blue is often used to symbolize the sea, echoing Mazu’s identity as the protector of the sea. For example, the upper body of Mazu costumes is blue, symbolizing the sea, while the lower body trousers are often red and black, with "red" representing good luck and "black" implying longing for relatives. This contrast between red and blue not only highlights the calmness of blue, but also contains the joy of red, creating a vibrant atmosphere.

The use of color in Mazu’s artistic works is often closely linked to the characteristics of Mazu culture. Through the use of specific color combinations and symbolic meanings, the artwork not only displays the image and temperament of Mazu, but also conveys the spirit of compassion, benevolence, courage and collaboration in Mazu culture. Through ingenious color matching and use of light and shadow, a mysterious, solemn and infectious atmosphere is created, allowing the audience to more intuitively feel the charm and spiritual connotation of Mazu culture.

5.Conclusion

"The Legend of Mazu" is a widely circulated folk tale in Guangxi and even coastal areas of China. It not only carries rich historical and cultural connotations, but also shows unique aesthetic charm. Through Mazu's magical deeds and maritime adventure stories, a world full of fantasy and mystery is constructed, inspiring people's curiosity and desire to explore the unknown world.

The language style of Guangxi Mazu beliefs and customs shows its unique aesthetic characteristics.

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Through vivid plot arrangements, delicate descriptions and rhythmic artistic expressions, the local cultural elements incorporated add to its regional characteristics and intimacy, making the works of art fascinating and exciting. In modern painting and other art forms, "The Legend of Mazu" has also been widely used and expressed. Through in-depth exploration and interpretation of Mazu's image, story scenes and cultural connotations, artists have created many works of artistic value. These works not only enrich the expression techniques and styles of painting art, but also further promote the artistic charm of Mazu culture and folk tales. "The Legend of Mazu" is a treasure among Guangxi folk tales. Its aesthetic features are reflected in its rich imagination, distinctive personality, language style and extensive artistic applications, making "The Legend of Mazu" a masterpiece with profound cultural heritage. Folk stories with artistic value are worthy of in-depth study and inheritance.

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