

# The Role of Quanzhou Taishi in the Revitalization of Rural Culture under the Perspective of Semiotics

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of Quanzhou Taishi in the process of revitalizing rural culture from the semiotics perspective. Quanzhou Taishi (a local folk art Combining Quanzhou Southern Shaolin Martial Arts and Lion Dance), has unique cultural characteristics and can serve as a cultural symbol. This paper will study its visual and auditory symbolic composition, explore its referential, symbolic, and value functions, delve into its spiritual connotations and significance in the new era, and develop the role of the Quanzhou Taishi in the process of rural cultural revitalization. Specifically, we will focus on the role of Quanzhou Taishi culture in revitalizing rural culture.

**Keywords:** Quanzhou Taishi; semiotics; local culture; rural culture; rural culture revitalization

## 1. The symbol of Quanzhou Taishi composition

### 1.1 Visual symbol of Quanzhou Taishi

Visual symbols contain visual elements such as color and image, which can affect people's image thinking, association, and cognition.[1][2] Jacobson points out that the most social, most abundant and most appropriate symbolic system in human society is based on vision and hearing.[3] The lion performance carries the thoughts of the local villagers and is expressed through the lion image modeling and performance form.

Among them, the lion head is the most eye-catching part. From the perspective of the shape symbol, the lion shape of Quanzhou Taishi has the beauty of symmetry. The lion head has the characteristics of convex eyes, a wide nose, and a wide mouth, showing the image characteristics of the lion in southern Fujian, and has the symbol of power and power. Quanzhou yellow lion on the decoration of more circular and fire grain. The flame pattern often appears on the head of a lion, as an important auspicious pattern, symbolizing exuberant vitality and prosperity. A flame pattern as an auspicious pattern decoration is used on the forehead to symbolize a prosperous life. In the overall shape, the circle is widely used, such as the decoration of the lion head. In ancient China, there is still the cosmic concept of "round sky and round place", and the circle often symbolizes harmony and unity. The lion color design from early development to now the symbolic meaning has changed, in the early, the lion image is given priority to blue or black, a symbol of resistance and national spirit, is closely linked with its historical background, with the historical changes, the lion color-rich, gradually bearing the festival and warm cultural implication.



Figure 1. Quanzhou Lion array (Photo from Shishi Rong Media Center)

The shape of the lion is powerful and the lion tail, smooth lines, with a strong explosive power, showing the sense of power and majesty of the lion. In the lion performance, the combination of head, body, and tail makes the overall performance have a strong movement and vitality. The analysis of the elements of the image symbol of the lion, it is conducive to intuitively understanding the cultural information conveyed by the symbolic symbol of Quanzhou lion in visual thinking.

Quanzhou Taishi, originally often performed in folk greeting competitions and “begging for fire” activities, has now become an indispensable part of major festivals.[4] The lion performance brings special time symbols to the audience a deeper cultural memory of the program, aiming to pray for good weather, good harvest, good peace and security, and make the new era Quanzhou lion with festive and cheerful symbolic implication, reflecting a symbolic metaphorical expression.

## **1.2 The auditory symbol of the Quanzhou Taishi**

The musical symbols of Quanzhou Taishi bear the role of transmitting the cultural connotation and rendering the festive atmosphere. Its auditory symbols mainly include the sound of gongs and drums, firecrackers, and the audience’s applause and applause. These specific sounds will touch the association of the public. The sound of gongs and drums starts before the performance to create a tense and exciting atmosphere, which is closely linked to the lion’s movements and expressions. Firecrackers in the lion was killed the most intense, enhancing the drama and shock, in celebration the audience cheered, applause, highlighting the theme of the festival, cheerful, through a series of auditory symbols express passionate, cheerful emotional cognition, deepen the Quanzhou people’s cultural identity, inspiring their inner feelings.

## **2. The symbol function of Quanzhou Taishi**

### **2.1 Reference functions**

In the transmission process of Quanzhou Taishi culture, symbols play its reference function all the time. Pierre Giro believes that the indicator function helps people identify and distinguish between individuals, avoid the confusion of symbols with reality, and is crucial to the accurate transmission of information.[5]

In the early stage of development, Quanzhou Taishi performance is named “kill Green Lion”, a metaphor for “beat Qing division”. According to Xishan Magazine, the Qing government ordered the burning of South Shaolin in Quanzhou in order to destroy the rebel forces in Fujian. The surviving monks spread martial arts in the ruins or in the wild, and opened martial arts schools in the name of “Taishi Hall”. [6] At that time, people will see the blue or black lion head associated with the yellow lion, referring to the heroic spirit against the national oppression of the Qing Dynasty.

With the passage of time and the continuous development and improvement of color theory, people’s cognition and application of color have become more profound. The richness of color of lion image not only lies in the increase of color types, but also reflected in the symbolic significance of lion image in line with the change of the new era. The lion image of retains the essence of traditional culture, and into the modern aesthetic elements, makes the ancient image in contemporary society still maintains vitality and attraction, developed the red, green and golden together lion image, represents the nature and hope of green, a symbol of auspicious and passion of red, harvest and rich golden combination together to give a person with thriving cheerful atmosphere.

### **2.2 Symbolic function**

The emergence of symbols comes from the social consensus, and people generally recognize the specific meaning of their representative, which encourages people to resonate in the communication.[7] Since its birth, the lion activity has the spirit of resistance, symbolizing the spirit of indomitable struggle and heroic spirit of Minnan people. In the new era of peace, the lion has become a symbol of auspicious, just like a pigeon symbol of peace, the lion is a symbol of exorcism, good luck and good luck.

### **2.3 Value function**

The value function of the symbol refers to the value of the symbol in a specific social, economic or cultural environment. Influenced by the concept of “Shaolin wind everywhere in southern Fujian” and the clan in Quanzhou. As a large-scale gathering, it has the valuable function of condensing villagers, enhancing social identity, providing entertainment and aesthetic experience, having the social function of regulating the psychology of rural groups, and providing a space for emotional catharsis for the audience. At the same time, the value orientation of courage, wisdom and unity contained in the lion culture is helpful to moral education and cultural education. From the perspective of symbolic political economy, Quanzhou Taishi, as a national intangible cultural heritage, has a certain economic value in the development of Quanzhou tourism in recent years. Its performance and cultural tourism products attract a large number of tourists and actively use the revitalization of rural culture.

### **3. The Role of Quanzhou Taishi in the revitalization of rural culture in the context of semiotics**

#### **3.1 Restructuring audio-visual symbols to create the IP image of Quanzhou village**

The symbol system of Quanzhou Taishi culture includes two major elements: visual and auditory, which is the cornerstone of rural IP image. In southern Fujian, we should combine local characteristics to reorganize symbols, use their symbolic elements such as modeling image, performance form, color, music and other symbolic elements, combine modern aesthetic and cultural trends, and create the IP image of Quanzhou village on the basis of symbol construction and innovation.

Optimize Quanzhou Taishi culture symbol elements, design new audio-visual symbols, such as animation, games, music, etc., at the same time build a story line around the lion culture, comprehensive build lion IP, dig the lion connotation, analysis characteristics, create characteristics and regional characteristics of symbol system color system, let the lion IP image more recognizable. We can create a series of plush toys with Quanzhou lion as the prototype, give them the story and art, through the Q version of the lion and different movements and expression display, to attract young people and children tourists. In addition, we can use the modern digital technology, combined with Quanzhou, lion visual and auditory symbols, create interactive and interesting, lion culture digital products, using VR technology, create interactive mobile applications and online small game, let users can through the virtual world experience Quanzhou off lion culture.

#### **3.2 Use the symbol function to develop the local cultural industry**

As a local cultural symbol with regional characteristics, Quanzhou Taishi has a unique value to the development of characteristic local cultural industry. In order to promote the development of local culture industry we can develop the lion culture as the theme of creative products, the lion image symbol used in T-shirts, postcards, stamps, art, even custom version of the lion image crafts, through online platform and entity store sales, the lion culture into daily life, promote the market value of the lion culture products. We can also use the symbolic elements of Quanzhou Taishi culture to develop local cuisine, Innovative production of special cakes, ice cream and drinks, Innovative “Lion head cake”, “Quanzhou Lion Dance Tea” and other food products, at the same time, From the milk tea industry, which is highly sought after by young people, Using the color symbols and pattern symbols of the Quanzhou Taishi, Combining it with modern aesthetics, Create a rare lion IP and milk tea brand joint products, In the product packaging design highlights the cheerful, festive atmosphere, Make products suitable for major festivals, And then through social media, star advertising and other ways to promote, Emphasize the cultural elements and local characteristics of Quanzhou Taishi of products, To attract consumers’ attention and stimulate their desire to buy, Thus enhance the competitiveness of Quanzhou local cultural products.

Quanzhou Taishi Performance integrates Chinese martial arts, acrobatics and folk dance, to create cultural tourism routes and experience projects with the theme of Taishi culture, which can help the development of rural tourism. We can also set up Quanzhou Taishi performance experience workshop, let visitors and local residents can personally participate in the performance process, learning five ancestors boxing martial arts moves and the lion performance skills, experience of Quanzhou Taishi cultural connotation, through the interactive experience enhance cognition of Quanzhou rural culture, and from promoting the development of Quanzhou rural tourism. besides, The Taishi Cultural Industry Development Alliance can be established, Through resource sharing and mutual benefit, Gather many forces, Let local enterprises, the lion inheritors and experts in the development of cultural industry jointly develop cultural products and tourism projects related to the lion culture, Using the unique symbol function of Quanzhou Taishi to inject new vitality into the local cultural industry, So as to create Quanzhou Taishi as the theme of the brand products, Increase brand awareness through joint marketing campaigns, Promote the spread of local characteristic culture, Drive the development of Quanzhou local culture industry chain, To bring economic benefits to Quanzhou local and also to further enrich the connotation of rural cultural construction.

#### **3.3 Spread the lion culture and cultivate the lion talent team**

Quanzhou lion culture with its exquisite lion dance skills and rich cultural symbols inherited, spread the lion culture, is of great significance to the revitalization of rural culture, so we need to promote the rural cultural talent training project, establish a perfect talent training and development system, so as to achieve the prosperity and development of Quanzhou rural culture.[8]

We can open the lion culture courses in school, through the narrative lion culture story, learning the lion performance skills, induction, lion symbol elements, let the students understand the lion of the history, cultural connotation and existence value, at the same time, can hold the lion culture lectures and lion culture theme exhibition, to enhance the audience respect for traditional culture and intangible culture and protection consciousness. In addition, we can also through the organization of Quanzhou lion artistic performance activities, open Quanzhou, lion martial arts hall, for Quanzhou rural culture revitali-

zation of cultivating a Quanzhou Taishi culture, with lion dance skills of Quanzhou, lion culture talent team.

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