ART FRONTIER

An International Art Journal / Vol. 3, No. 2 (Total Issue No. 10) Apr.-Jun., 2025

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To cite this article: Wang Zihao, "Qiaopi Network and Art Ecosystem: A Study on the Art Sponsorship Mechanism in Southern Fujian," *Art Frontier* 3, no.2 (Juny 2025): 126-135, https://doi.org/10.64212/NSPJ5287.

DOI: 10.64212/NSPJ5287

ISSN: 2835-5490
EISSN: 2836-841X

This article has undergone double-blind peer review.

Website: www.artfrontier.org
Email: artfrontier2023@outlook.com
Publishing Frequency: Quarterly (March, June, September, December)

Qiaopi Network and Art Ecosystem: A Study on the Art Sponsorship Mechanism in Southern Fujian

Wang Zihao

Abstract

This study examines the Qiaopi network in Southern Fujian to explore how transnational capital flows promoted the formation of local art production and cultural ecosystems during the first half of the twentieth century. It analyzes the operational mechanisms of the remittance system, the direction of capital flows, and their multifaceted impacts on folk art creation, architectural styles, and art education. Additionally, it investigates the localization of Nanyang visual elements under official cultural control. The research indicates that the Qiaopi network functioned not merely as an economic support system but as a mechanism for cultural transmission and reciprocity, embodying the agency of overseas Chinese in shaping their homeland's cultural development within a globalized context. The artistic ecosystem of Southern Fujian gradually took shape through this structural process, revealing the diversity and complexity of non-Western paths to modernity.

Key Words

Qiaopi, artistic ecology, art patronage, transnationalism

Since the New Culture Movement of the early twentieth century and its integration of Western historiographical theories, modern Chinese art history research has continuously sought methodological approaches—a pursuit that remains fashionable and burgeoning. The vibrant practice of the contemporary South China School offers insights into Chinese scholars' approaches to regional history studies. The South China School, a transregional school of historical studies formed by generations of scholars primarily from Xiamen University, Sun Yat-sen University, and The Chinese University of Hong Kong. For decades, they have researched the regional political, economic, social, and cultural histories of the Greater South China region (Fujian, Guangdong, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau), focusing on studies related to political systems, lineages, religion, household registration, and markets. The core concept of the South China School's regional history research is viewing the historical evolution of a specific region as a structural process. This approach emphasizes both the importance of purposeful human action in historical evolution and the dynamic nature of structure itself. This can be further understood through specific theoretical explanations: "We have often unnecessarily dichotomized the concepts of 'structure' and 'change.' In reality, we recognize that the 'role' individuals play in analytical research is not about understanding 'structure' per se, but rather the 'structural process.' Through their purposeful actions, individuals weave networks of relationships and meanings, which in turn either facilitate or constrain their subsequent actions—an endless cycle.[1]"

Li Yumin argues that China's mainstream modern art history narrative has long been marked by a dual phenomenon of marginalization. The first is spatial obscuring: existing research predominantly focuses on the Western Painting Movement in Beijing and Shanghai—such as the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts founded by Liu Haisu—while paying insufficient attention to locally autonomous explorations of modernity. The second is an obscuring of actors, as existing literature emphasizes the deeds of renowned

 DOI: 10.64212/NSPJ5287

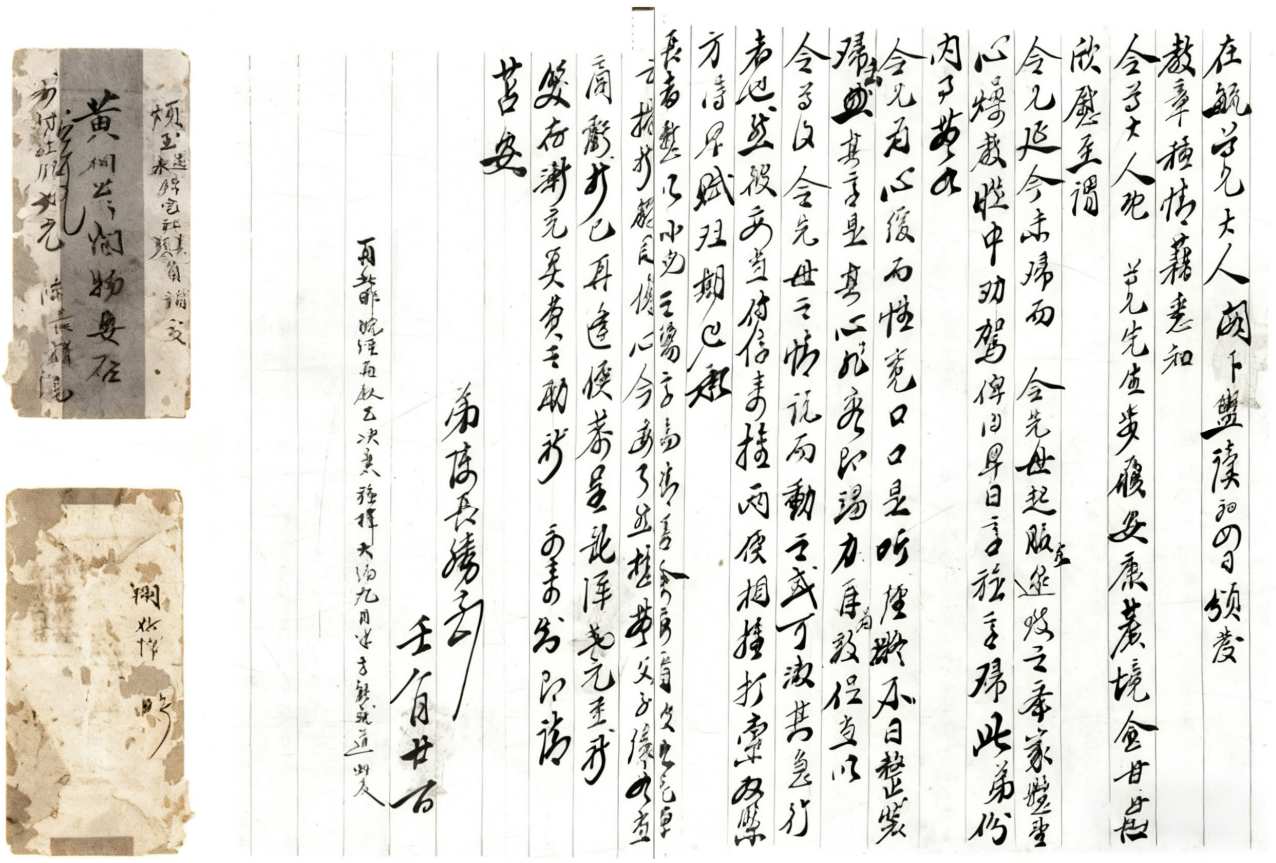

Figure 1. Chen Changsheng from the Philippines, Huang Kaiwu from Tong'an Jinzhai sealed and sent the letter.

artists like Xu Beihong while paying scant attention to the unnamed yet crucial folk collaborative systems.

Based on this, this paper raises two core questions: First, how did the qiaopi network drive artistic production in southern Fujian through economic flows? Second, how did visual elements from Nanyang undergo local transformation under the backdrop of official cultural control?

1. Overseas Chinese Capital Flows and the Formation of Cultural Industries

Qiaopi specifically refers to remittances and family letters sent from overseas Chinese to their families in China through private institutions between 1900 and 1949, characterized by the dual function of financial remittance and correspondence. Qiaopi agencies, serving as transnational remittance intermediaries, numbered as many as 243 across Fujian Province in the 1920s. Water couriers (shuikè) served as individual messengers transporting qiaopi across borders, typically charging 3–5% of the remittance amount as commission.

Funds originated from labor income and commercial profits of Southeast Asian Chinese. They were collected by overseas Qiaopi agencies (e.g., Jian Da Xin Bureau and Hong An Xin Bureau in the Philippines) or door-to-door by shuikè, operating in regions such as Manila (Philippines), Penang (Malaysia), and Singapore. For example, multiple remittances in the Huang Kaiwu family's qiaopi records originated from the Philippines (e.g., No. 01-002 "Huang Kaiwu of the Philippines to Father at Jin House, Tong'an"), with funds in the form of silver dollars or U.S. currency. Initially, funds were primarily carried by water couriers. Later, they circulated through the transnational networks of overseas remittance agencies, with some utilizing instruments like bills of exchange (e.g., the "Check Issued by Manila Jian Da Remittance Agency and Cashed by Anhai Qianji Remittance Agency" recorded in Volume 11) and telegraphic transfer orders.[2] Within the context of global trade in the twentieth century, qiaopi in Southern Fujian exemplified the close ties between overseas Chinese and financial flows. Similar transnational financial networks were also established by other migrant communities worldwide—for instance, the hawala system in the Middle East and rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), in which members pooled funds for family

or entrepreneurial use. Such systems relied on community trust and cooperation, functioning as a widespread form of mutual financial support.

Remittance agencies functioned as intermediaries for collection and disbursement. For instance, after receiving remittances in the Philippines, agencies would transfer funds to hometowns via branches in Xiamen, Zhangzhou, and other locations (e.g., "Anhai Qianji Mail Agency"). Funds were ultimately disbursed in person to overseas Chinese families by domestic money transfer agencies or banks (e.g., Document 01-001 "Philippines Chen Changsheng to Huang Kaiwu in Jin Zhai, Tong'an," explicitly marked "Pay ×× Yuan to Recipient"). Uses included household expenses, property purchases, and education. Some reply letters show that families reported back on how the funds were used, forming a closed-loop record of capital flow.

The overseas remittance system established a distinct three-tiered structure for art patronage. Overseas Chinese employers conveyed requests for ancestral hall construction or artistic commissions to remittance agencies via money transfers accompanied by creative instructions. Upon receiving funds, the agencies paid commissions to water couriers. Water couriers bore the crucial responsibility of conveying customized requests to domestic recipient families, who then commissioned folk artists for the creations. For works requiring return delivery, folk artists completed the pieces and handed them to water couriers, who transported them overseas to deliver directly to the overseas employers.[3]

A notable example involves Huang Xiulang, a 1935 Filipino-Chinese immigrant who remitted 500 silver dollars via the Wang Shunxing Money Transfer Agency to commission a stone carving of *The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars* from Jinjiang artists. This work is now housed at Jinjiang's Guobai Mountain Villa. Between 1937 and 1941, water courier Chen Sanpin transported a total of twenty-seven batches of artworks to Singapore.

A 1912 remittance from the Philippines to Jin House in Tong'an explicitly stated "Please note the sale of bulk timber and stone materials for construction," confirming funds were allocated to procure building materials for traditional vernacular houses (cuo) in their hometown. These Minnan traditional houses, integrating brick carving and wood carving techniques, belong to the category of folk art. Such financial support directly supported the preservation of traditional architectural arts. Multiple remittance letters (e.g., Nos. 01-222, 01-238) mention funds for "repairing ancestral homes" and "renovating ancestral houses." The Huang Kaiwu family's ancestral home in Jin Zhai, Tong'an, preserves traditional Minnan architectural elements like "swallowtail ridges (yanwei ji)" and "saddle walls (ma'an qiang)." These financial investments indirectly sustained local architectural heritage.[4]

Beyond small-scale individual remittances, a substantial share took the form of direct investments by overseas Chinese merchants in China, profoundly impacting Minnan's cultural industries. Tan Kah Kee prioritized both infrastructure and curriculum development for art education in his overseas Chinese hometown schools. Taking Jimei School as an example, its institutional setup included an art museum as early as the 1920s,[5] and during wartime an arts and crafts exhibition hall was established at its Anxi campus. Regarding library resources, Xiamen University's 1941 recruitment advertisement highlighted its collection of over 100,000 volumes, including art-related titles. By 1947, Jimei School's library holdings reached over 70,000 volumes, with 927 dedicated to art. In curriculum development, Xiamen University established the Institute of Chinese Studies in 1926, incorporating art subjects into its offerings. That same year, Jimei School established its Faculty of Chinese Studies modeled after Peking University, incorporating calligraphy into the high school Chinese literature curriculum.[6] Since the 1910s, the school had offered fine arts courses. Despite the turmoil of the 1940s, art education continued uninterrupted. Both Jimei's middle and high school divisions educated students under the guiding principle of nurturing national culture, aiming to cultivate their minds and bodies while fostering an interest in the arts. The junior high division had art classrooms equipped with plaster models, sketching boards, and easels. Both junior and senior high included drawing as an academic competition subject. Art and crafts formed the combined arts discipline, with joint department meetings held. Regulations stipulated that students would not receive grades if their submitted works failed to reach two-thirds of the required assignments or were not completed and submitted within the specified deadlines. In Singapore, the Overseas Chinese School founded by Tan Kah Kee also recruited pioneers of the Nanyang School of Painting such as Lim Hak Tai, Liu Kang, Zhong Sibin, Chen Wenxi, and Chen Zongrui to teach.[7] The Overseas Chinese School also collaborated with other Chinese schools to organize diverse art activities. The school capitalized on Singaporean festivals and commemorative dates to host calligraphy and painting competitions, as well as public exhibitions showcasing art and photography works. Featured pieces included landscape and still-life Chinese paintings, oil paintings, watercolors, chalk drawings, pencil drawings, charcoal sketches, prints (including woodcuts), and paper-cut

artworks, as well as applied art designs like embroidery, fabric patterns, advertisements, book covers, paper boxes, stamps, schoolbags, and record sleeves. Exhibitions often featured hundreds of pieces.

Overseas Chinese capital also frequently supported art exhibitions by overseas Chinese. In the 1930s and 1940s, Tan Kah Kee facilitated fundraising exhibitions for the War of Resistance through organizations he led, such as the Xinhua Relief Fund and the Southern Overseas Chinese Association. For instance, in June 1939, the Xinhua Relief Fund hosted an exhibition of works by Ong Schan Tchow. At the opening ceremony, Weng Zhanqiu specifically expressed gratitude toTan Kah Kee.[8] In August, cartoonists Yu Shihai and Ning Hanzhang from the Kunming branch of the Chinese Literary Association traveled from Burma to Singapore to hold a fundraising exhibition. Upon their arrival, they met specifically with Tan Kah Kee. After learning the details of the exhibition, Tan Kah Kee, impressed by its "commendable spirit of charity," immediately decided to host it through the Xinghua Relief Fund. In December, the Xinghua Relief Fund organized a joint fundraising exhibition of calligraphy and paintings, appointing Tan Kah Kee, Lim Kim Dian, Lim Ching-nien, Zeng Jichen, Tan Chin Hean, and Lin Shiwan as honorary presidents. In June, to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the July 7 War of Resistance, Tan Kah Kee, along with Li Tiemin, Wang Yingxiang, Deng Taifu, Chen Guoqi, Li Chunrong, Lin Zhenzhong, and Guo Shanshu, resolved to issue commemorative art vouchers to support the relief fund.[9]

The Luchao School of Fine Arts, founded with donations led by Filipino-Chinese entrepreneur Huang Changshui, served as the precursor to the Xiamen College of Arts and Crafts at Fuzhou University. In November 1951, the Fujian Provincial Education Department formally approved the establishment of the private Luchao School of Fine Arts. In the spring of 1952, the school opened at No. 38 Tianwei Road, Gulangyu (now within the Provincial Sanatorium). By mid-1952, the school relocated to the Bagua Building at No. 43 Guxin Road, Gulangyu. However, the Bagua Building had long been abandoned and was in a dilapidated state requiring extensive renovation. The founders not only raised part of the funds themselves but also mobilized social forces to donate and support the school. For instance, one of the school's founders, teacher Li Qizheng, persuaded his elder brother Li Qibin to contribute, while school teacher Zheng Guangyao mobilized his father Zheng Wenliang to donate funds. Through tireless efforts by school leaders and broad societal support, the Luchao School of Fine Arts Board of Directors was established in 1953. Huang Changshui participated in funding the school's founding and served as Honorary Chairman of the Board. Lin Caizhi and Luo Dan served as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively, with Zhang Xia as Board Secretary. Over time, the board recruited over twenty distinguished members including Cai Yanjie, Cai Jitang, Du Chirong, Yan Xiyue, Zhou Minghui, Xiao Feng, Yang Dikang, Cai Wushi, Ouyang Huang, and over twenty other distinguished community members as board members. Each director generously contributed to support the school's operations. Combined with subsidies from the Provincial Cultural Bureau and student tuition fees, this largely resolved the school's funding issues and maintained its normal functioning.

2. Cultural Feedback across Borders

From the late Qing Dynasty to the Republican era, Fuzhou's architectural style underwent profound transformation and evolution. Traditional Fuzhou dwellings primarily utilized natural materials like blue bricks, blue stone and timber, reflecting the region's deep cultural heritage. However, with the implementation of the late Qing reforms, Western building materials and techniques began flooding in, introducing new materials like steel and glass into the local landscape. Against this backdrop, Qiaocuo (overseas Chinese residences) emerged as one of the earliest residential types to embrace these new materials, showcasing unique innovation and inclusivity. Since these Qiaocuo buildings were mostly newly constructed with later-stage overseas Chinese capital, they did not adopt the incorporation approach common in traditional dwellings—simply applying new materials to parts of existing structures. Instead, Qiaocuo architecture used new materials as the primary structural elements while skillfully incorporating and blending traditional Fuzhou decorative elements. The begonia floral pattern, symbolizing family harmony and happiness, is embossed onto glass surfaces. This design not only conveys the modernity of new materials but also subtly integrates Fuzhou's traditional culture of auspiciousness (fu culture). The overall decorative effect harmoniously blends with Western-style materials without appearing jarring. This demonstrates the open-mindedness of overseas Qiaocuo residences in embracing and assimilating new elements while preserving the essence of local tradition.[10]

In Minqing County, nestled in Fujian's mountainous region, stands Xingyuan—a distinctive type of cultural

Figure 2. The old appearance of the Xinyuan.

residence. Constructed in 1925, it was funded by Liu Guanqiu, the twenty-ninth generation descendant of the Liu clan of Luojiao. Having ventured to Sibu, Malaysia in 1917 to establish the Heli Garden plantation, Liu returned to his hometown in 1925 to personally design this new residence (xin cuo). After its completion, he sold the western half of the property to his elder brother, Liu Guanshi. Since Liu Guanshi was known by the courtesy name Xingcun and Liu Guanqiu by Suyuan, the name "Xingyuan"[11] was coined by combining one character from each brother's courtesy name. Xingyuan's uniqueness lies in the absence of explicit Sino-Western hybrid architectural features. Instead, its spatial layout reveals a distinct split-level spatial layout. This breaks away from the traditional ritual-centered layout dominated by the main hall and ancestral shrine (gongpo kan), instead reconstructing a functional residential system integrating reception, living, production, and defense. With virtually no redundant space, it exemplifies the transitional spatial characteristics from traditional to modern design.[12] The Liu family were among Minqing's earliest Christian converts. The Brothers Liu successively migrated to Sibu in Southeast Asia for land cultivation, becoming prominent local gentry and overseas Chinese leaders. Their residence design neither followed Minqing's grand traditional mansions (mingzhai dacuo) style—characterized by wooden decorative elements like dougong brackets, carved brackets arms (queti), or arched beam structures (wanfang)—nor did it follow the modern Chinese architectural trend of privileging Western styles. Instead, it presents a simple exterior with rich spatial arrangements.

Over a dozen residential examples resembling the form of Xingyuan have been identified in locations such as Bandong Town, Sanxi Township, and Yunlong Township within Minqing County. Among the collected architectural samples, these structures span the period from the 1930s to the 1940s. Their owners had all previously participated in the Sibu settlement in Malaysia and were predominantly Christians. In June 1902, Huang Naishang led settlers from ten counties of Fuzhou to the new settlement of Xinshu Mountain in Sibu, Sarawak. Huang named it Xincuo'an, meaning new attap houses built for the pioneers, expressing hopes for peaceful and successful land reclamation.[13] Attap

Figure 3. Appearance of the Xingyuan.

refers to the leaves of the palm family, which are tough and waterproof, making them an excellent material for roofing. The defining feature of this architectural style is its use of locally sourced materials, ease of construction, and the entire structure being built on stilts elevated above the ground, forming a stilt house (a ganlan-style dwelling).[14] At the Xincuo'an settlement in Sibu, Minqing-born overseas Chinese leaders such as Huang Naishang and Liu Jiashu organized an immigrant community under the leadership of Chinese Christians. Subsequently, the Christian church successively built the Chinese Methodist School and the Methodist Boys' School in Sibu, both adopting the attap house architectural form. The use of these stilted architectural elements on facades was simple, free, and diverse, resembling the facade style of modern Fujian-Qing overseas Chinese residences represented by Xingyuan.[15]

Discussions on attap houses should also be situated within the broader context of colonial architectural evolution in Asia. Since modern times, Southeast Asia has undergone complex cultural fusion due to multifaceted influences from both Eastern and Western civilizations. The Sibu Settlement in modern Sarawak was an agricultural-based overseas Chinese community, mirroring the unique mountainous overseas Chinese cultural system that emerged in Minqing villages. This starkly contrasts with the industrial and commercial environments brought by China's port regions since the nineteenth century, a divergence shaped by the distinctive conditions and evolution of local culture geography. If the arcade-style shop houses of coastal southern Fujian absorbed elements from Southeast Asian urban verandah-style shop houses, then the modern mountainous Chinese immigrant dwellings in Minqing, exemplified by Xingyuan, likely incorporated the morphological characteristics of Nanyang vernacular architecture. Consequently, they exhibit distinct spatial features and evolutionary trajectories compared to coastal regions. These dwellings not only represented a transplantation of form; their rich spatial design narratives also resulted from selections and adaptations within the context of Minqing's vernacular architectural culture.[16]

Such cultural transplants are not uncommon among other ethnic groups: Malaysian-Chinese architect Wong Yong-ho combined Peranakan culture with Chaozhou

architecture, spending eight months renovating a century-old house in Shantou's Longhu District to create China's first Peranakan museum-themed restaurant. He incorporated Nanyang woven rattan screens and glass inlay techniques, fusing Chaozhou ceramic inlay with Penang terracotta mosaic craftsmanship to endow the old house's facade with the black-and-white striped aesthetic of Nanyang landmarks. This practice of "Southeast Asian spirit nourishing Chaozhou architecture" validates Alejandro Portes' transnationalism theory—where immigrants maintain multiple cultural identities through transnational networks, forming "transnational social fields."[17] Italian immigrants' descendants brought American garment manufacturing techniques back to their homeland, propelling Milan's rise as a global fashion hub in the 1970s. Designers like Giorgio Armani drew inspiration from American casual styles to introduce minimalist pieces such as the power suit, while preserving Italy's artisanal tailoring traditions—a model of cultural hybridization.

The actions of Minnan overseas Chinese, who through global activities infuse foreign cultures back into their homeland, epitomize global migratory exchange. Such multidimensional cultural fusion inevitably involves complex, phased attempts. Every culture retains its foundational characteristics. By tracing their localized transplantation paths, we can uncover the underlying economic and political motivations behind their tensions and convergences.

3. Traditional Power and the Contest with Overseas Chinese Practices

As an immigrant group, overseas Chinese are difficult to define in terms of political identity and cultural representation. This ambiguity was particularly pronounced in the early twentieth century, when the Nationalist government's approach to external forces was marked by both negotiation and vigilance, leading to evolving official policies toward overseas Chinese.

In 1921, the Bureau of Overseas Chinese Labor was reorganized into the Bureau of Overseas Chinese Affairs, marking the formal establishment of a central government agency for overseas Chinese affairs. That same year, the Beiyang government required all consuls abroad to conduct registration of overseas Chinese when issuing passports, and conducted two surveys of overseas Chinese communities the following year. In 1923, the Beiyang government again restructured the Bureau of Overseas Chinese Affairs and promulgated policies to establish a series of overseas Chinese affairs institutions. Following the establishment of the Nanjing Nationalist Government in 1927, it continued to improve the establishment of overseas Chinese affairs institutions both domestically and abroad, set up local branch offices for overseas Chinese affairs, and formulated and implemented new overseas Chinese affairs plans. In 1937, Japan launched its full-scale invasion of China. The Chinese government responded by expanding and further specifying its overseas Chinese policies, including measures to solicit donations from overseas Chinese, protect overseas Chinese students' education, attract overseas Chinese talent, and initiated the establishment of Qiaole Village to accommodate returning refugees.[18]

However, alongside macro-level policies protecting overseas Chinese, the government also imposed strict controls. Article 14 of the *Regulations of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee*, promulgated in 1929, explicitly stipulated that "overseas Chinese-funded cultural projects must uphold orthodox Chinese traditions." During the New Life Movement launched in 1934, decorative elements that blended Chinese and Western styles were even removed from overseas Chinese residences in Jinjiang. This prompted a joint protest from the overseas Chinese community: "Can we not adorn our own doorways with what we earned through blood and sweat in Southeast Asia?"[19] Through these policies and actions, the Nationalist government sought to exercise strict control over overseas Chinese cultural projects, ensuring that cultural development conformed to official orthodoxy.

The overall situation for overseas Chinese in their host countries was also far from optimistic. Many Southeast Asian nations implemented anti-Chinese measures. For instance, in the Philippines, many overseas Chinese had prospered through hard work, yet they faced "suspicion from the Philippine government and Filipinos, leading to anti-Chinese actions."[20] Consequently, most overseas Chinese sent their children to live in China, and over time educational issues became increasingly prominent. Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia explicitly stated: "As the majority of overseas Chinese have migrated to Southeast Asia, this discussion takes Southeast Asia as the standard. The educational policy for overseas Chinese remains undetermined precisely because their overseas environments vary significantly, making it impossible to establish a uniform educational approach. …Yet today, complacency is untenable… Only by swiftly establishing an overseas Chinese education policy can we hope for remedy. Matters such as defining educational objectives, securing funding, establishing incentive systems, com-

piling and reviewing textbooks, determining teacher qualifications and compensation, and promulgating organizational regulations are all of utmost urgency and importance!"[21] From the perspective of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, however, the domestic government and populace in the early Republican period showed little concern for their plight. For instance, in 1927 Siam enacted an immigration law to restrict Chinese settlement. Although Siamese Chinese collectively opposed the measure and dispatched representatives to China to seek assistance, both the government and the public paid little attention. At that time, there was not even a Chinese consul stationed in Siam.[22]

Faced with official restrictions, local communities adopted a series of creative coping strategies. Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia funded the cultivation of cultural figures and professional educators. For instance, in 1928, Guo Yinglin, recommended by educator Yan Wenchu, secured sponsorship from overseas merchant Lin Zhuguang to study in France. He enrolled at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, pursuing painting while working part-time to complete his oil painting studies. In 1933, Guo Yinglin returned to Xiamen and was appointed Director of the Art Museum at Jimei Educational Institutions, concurrently teaching Western painting at Xiamen Academy of Fine Arts (Specialized School). He remained dedicated to art education in Xiamen thereafter.[23] Gulangyu Island cultivated a distinctive approach to art education, eschewing the cultural orthodoxy promoted by the Nationalist government and instead fostering a free and open cultural environment. In 1938, at the invitation of Principal Lin Kegong of Xiamen Academy of Fine Arts (Specialized School), Taiwanese painter Zhang Wanchuan joined the faculty. At the academy, Zhang taught Western painting and Japanese language, excelling not only in meticulous sketching but also in expressionist and abstract styles. Upon returning to Taiwan in early 1939, Zhang confided to friends that his years of artistic life on Gulangyu had realized his long-cherished "Paris dream."[24]

Cultural transmission also requires consideration of the receptivity of indigenous traditions in the receiving culture, rather than imposing forced adaptation. Thus, the Overseas Chinese style and Minnan folk culture underwent a process of negotiation and integration. The former residence of Yang Amiao in Tingdian Village, Jiangnan Town, Licheng District, Quanzhou, was constructed by Yang Amiao, an overseas Chinese from the Philippines. Construction began in the twentieth year of the Guangxu reign (1894) and was completed in the third year of the Xuantong reign (1911). Architecturally, the residence follows the traditional layout of a traditional five-bay, two-wing layout with paired protective wings. However, its specific floor plan exhibits variations, including a "five-plum-blossom" style courtyard arrangement and the treatment of the protective wing's flower hall, suggesting evolutionary developments within traditional forms. These changes, however, stem from emerging as internal derivations of traditional construction logic, rather than being entirely influenced by foreign architectural cultures. This distinctiveness reflects the owner's compromise with the traditional gentry class while subtly expressing an aspiration for innovation within the gentry class itself.

Following the early Republican-era economic reforms, the influence of overseas Chinese in southern Fujian grew increasingly potent. Amidst the influx of foreign cultures, the social landscape underwent profound transformation. For overseas Chinese in southern Fujian during the 1920s and 1930s, constructing Western-style houses to showcase their social status became a prevailing trend. Westernization in daily life was, to some extent, associated with higher wealth and social standing. Western architectural styles thus transcended mere aesthetic preference, becoming a declaration of social identity.

The dynamic interplay between traditional forces and overseas Chinese culture—evolving from resistance and counterbalance to mutual development—not only reflected socioeconomic shifts but also impacted traditional social structures and cultural traditions. This process propelled societal transformation while organically integrating foreign cultural elements: local governments and civil organizations represented by overseas Chinese communities alternately constraining and cooperating with one another, collectively advancing modern municipal construction and urban renewal in regional cities.

4. Conclusion

Based on an in-depth analysis throughout this paper, the artistic ecosystem constructed by the Minnan Qiaopi network is by no means an isolated local cultural phenomenon. Rather, it serves as a classic microcosm of cultural production and dissemination within global diaspora communities. Its core mechanism—driving local artistic creation through transnational informal financial networks (qiaopi) and forming hybrid modern styles through synergy with nation-state cultural policies—provides an invaluable paradigm for understanding cultural flows in the era of globalization.

The Minnan paradigm reveals the diversity and agency of modernization pathways in non-Western worlds, dismantling traditional center-periphery models of cultural transmission. It demonstrates how peripheral regions can proactively draw resources through global networks to reshape cultural landscapes. No cultural identity is pure; all emerge through continuous negotiation, translation, and recreation within specific spatiotemporal contexts. The scroll-work patterns adorning Minnan overseas Chinese houses and the educational practices of the Egret Tide Art School stand as tangible crystallizations of this creative negotiation. Explorations of modernity have never been singular paths of Westernization or retrospection. Instead, they constitute a plural modernity collectively forged by countless grassroots individuals through daily practices amid globalization's currents. At its core lies the spirit of pragmatic innovation, cross-cultural translation, and steadfast local commitment—the dynamic tension between fluid civilization and individual agency.

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僑批網路與藝術生態——跨文化下的閩南地區美術贊助機制研究

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摘　要：本文以閩南僑批網路為研究對象，探討其在 20 世紀上半葉如何通過跨國資金流動推動地方藝術生產與文化生態的塑造。文章分析了僑批系統的運作機制、資金流向及其對民間藝術創作、建築風格、美術教育等多方面的影響，同時考察了南洋視覺元素在官方文化管控背景下的本土化轉化過程。研究指出，僑批網路不僅是一種經濟支持系統，更是一種文化藝術傳播與反哺的機制，體現了僑民在全球化背景下對原鄉文化建設的能動作用。閩南地區的藝術生態正是在這種“結構過程”中逐漸形成，展現出非西方現代性路徑的多元與複雜。

關鍵詞：僑批；藝術生態；美術贊助；跨國主義