

## Huolong Firework Ceremony at Qiaolin, Jieyang City, China: Self-Identity and Representation in the Context of National Intangible Cultural Heritage

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### Abstract

*This study is a comprehensive examination of the Huolong Firework ritual of the Lin clan, a prominent community in Jieyang City, Guangdong, China. It explores the process through which local folk activities have evolved into a national intangible cultural heritage. The study delves into how the Lin clan constructs its identity and representation through ritual, encompassing both daily life and ceremonial expressions. The research highlights the close relationship between self-identity and representation, which reflects varying expression needs in different historical contexts. As a result, this study holds significant academic value in the realm of identity and serves as a crucial database for the study of national intangible cultural heritage rituals. The chapter is structured into three main parts: the historical and cultural development of the Lin clan; the period before and after attaining intangible cultural heritage status; and the final part focuses on the Huolong Firework ceremony conducted by the Lin clan in 2023.*

**Keywords:** *Huolong Firework Ceremony, Self-identity, Representation of Self Identity, Local Culture, National Intangible Cultural Heritage.*

### Introduction

Qiaolin is a community dominated by people surnamed Lin in Jieyang City, Guangdong Province, southeast China. They migrated from the north and finally settled here. The Lin clan has strong cultural ties to the local society where they settled. The Huolong Firework ceremony passed down from generation to generation within the Lin clan has unique local characteristics. It is closely related to the native status and social relations of the Lin clan. In addition, according to the existing research on Qiaolin Huolong Firework Ceremony, they conducted research from the aspects of traditional festivals, cultural symbols, and inheritance, but mainly focused on the basic phenomena for analysis.

However, as the Qiao Lin Huolong Firework ceremony was upgraded from a local folklore activity to a National Intangible Cultural Heritage, it was discovered that the ceremony changed with the country's political system, reflecting the Lin clan's different needs for self-identity and representation. This discovery will be elevated to an important academic issue for research. In addition, this study also provides an important knowledge basis for

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the development of folk activities in the current context of China's intangible cultural heritage.

### The research methods

This is basic research, using qualitative research methodology. We collected two sets of data: the field survey data and the documentary data from Qiaodong Village, Qiaoxi Village and Qiaonan Village, three villages in Qiaolin, Jieyang. The researcher's field data were collected by observation, participant observation, general interview, and key informant interview, and focus group interviews. Documentation information and generally related documents, both paper documents and internet systems. The data synthesis was based on the research framework, which is information about the Lin clan's local construction of self-identity through the Huolong Firework ceremonies. In addition to focusing on the relationship between the ceremonies and the social lifestyle of the Lin clan, the research results are presented with a descriptive analysis under two main concepts: "Self-Identity" from the concept book "Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age" by Anthony Giddens (1991), and the concept of "Representation" from the book "Representation" by Stuart Hall(1997).

### Research results

Part 1. The relationship between the historical origin of Huolong Firework and local culture

1.1 The origin of the Lin clan in Jieyang and the historical development of social culture in Qiaolin Village

1) Descent from the nobles of the Shang Dynasty (2nd dynasty of China, 2000 BCE).

According to the Records of Guqiao provided by Mr. Lin Jiannan : the ancestors of the Lin family came from the emperor Gao Xin. Bigan, the prince of the Shang Dynasty, was persecuted to death because of the fatuous and immoral King Zhou, who repeatedly faced remonstrance. King Wu of Zhou sealed Bigan's tomb after he destroyed the Shang Dynasty, and summoned Mrs. Bigan and her son. Because the child was born in the stone room of Changlin, he was named Jian and given the surname Lin. Appointed as a doctor (official title), move to bolin to be knighted.

Having a wide family lineage and continually supporting the missions of the royal family.



Figure 1: Lin Clan's migration map and the settlement.

Source: Adapted from Records of Guqiao

The picture above shows the history of the Lin Clan people's movement before settling in Qiao Lin. Starting from the Qin dynasty, the Lin family moved to various important cities, such as eastward to Qi and Lu. During the Western Jin Dynasty, went south to Xiapi. In 307 AD, moved to Jianye. Until Lin's Lugong entered Fujian (today's Fujian region of

China), he moved all the way with the title awarded by the emperor. They moved from Jin'an to Putian, Zhangpu and other places in 583 AD.

In 618 A.D. of the Tang Dynasty, Wanchong Gong, the fifteenth grandson of Lin Lu Gong, had three sons, Tao Gong, Pi Gong, and Chang Gong. Among them, the 9 sons of Pi Gong were all state herdsman (official positions), and they are called "Nine Mulin Family" in the world. The Lin family of Qiaolin in Jieyang came from the sixth family branch of the "Nine Mulin Family" - Shaozhou Inspector Yungong (the ninety-fifth generation). In the first year of Baoli (825 A.D.) of Emperor Jingzong of the Tang Dynasty, The emperor continued to add glory to the Lin family.

In short, the Lin family is proud of the surname Lin and is very proud of being able to advance and retreat with the Chinese imperial power in the development history of the clan, which is also a strong expression of the self-identity of the Lin surname.

## 2) Why Jieyang

The reason why people surnamed Lin chose to re-establish their family business in Jieyang was both inevitable and accidental. During the Southern Song Dynasty, people surnamed Lin lived in Putian for more than 600 years. At that time, the move of state power to the south led to a large influx of people into Fujian, resulting in the compression of local land and food resources. The long-term development needs of the Lin clan could no longer be guaranteed, and they began to look outward for development. Driven by the opportunity of the official system in the Song Dynasty, although Tao Gong, a member of the Lin clan, was assigned to Guangdong to visit various places, he was burdened with the mission of "selecting places" for the development of the clan. After seeing Jieyang's excellent environment and flourishing humanities, he decided to move to Jieyang and ordered his third son Chong Gong to start the family business in Qiaolinli (now Qiaolin) in Jieyang.

At that time, the Southern Song Dynasty was overthrown, and the Yuan Dynasty was rising. The people of the Lin clan who had moved to Jieyang were brutally persecuted and were forced to flee to surrounding areas to escape the war. The memorial tablets of the Lin clan's chiefs and gods were all burned down, and the lineage inheritance collapsed. Until the political situation stabilized in the Hongwu Year of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1398), the people surnamed Lin gradually returned to Qiaolin's hometown in Jieyang from all directions. At that time, local unrest was not yet stable, and small-scale wars still occurred from time to time. They began to build the village wall, set up the village gate and watchtower, and arranged for the tribesmen to patrol and guard in shifts. Juzhai Gong, who was the 11th generation leader of the Lin clan at the time, presided over the compilation of the family tree, which was also the first family tree of the Lin clan in Qiaolin, Jieyang. He reorganized the genealogy of his ancestors and established the "Si Fang" branch lineage for better clan reproduction and development. Then, the memorial tablets of the Lin clan's main gods that were burned during the war were rebuilt, and the ritual activities of worshiping ancestors were resumed. A clan temple was built in 1642 in the Qing Dynasty. Since then, each branch of the surnamed Lin has also determined the days for the ancestor worship.

For the Chinese, remembering the history of a family by tracing it through the generations is not only the "duty" of the younger generations to pay respects to their ancestors, but it also means a dignified existence. This is consistent with Schermerhorn's statement that "Without the myth of lineage, it is difficult for ethnic groups to survive for a long time.(Schermerhorn 1970, Chapter 1) This sense of 'where did we come from' is very important for defining 'who we are'. Precise recollection of past events and objects is equally important for Chinese rural people, where local history is combined with family group identity. As R.Watson said: "Ancestor worship relies on family narratives, sacrificial ceremonies and renewal of family trees, which stimulate people's memory of the dead, and remind each generation of their identities and obligations." (R.Watson1988:203- 27)

### 3) Lin Family's Important Role in Jieyang

Qiaolin Township, where the Lin clan is located, is in Pandong Street, Jiedong District, Jieyang City. Starting from the west gate of Rongcheng in the east, it is adjacent to Tampu, Banyang, and Yucheng Village; to the west, it is connected to Fujingqiao and Yangmei Village; to the south, it borders Xianjiao and Panzai Village; to the north, it borders Xiazhai and Shangli Village. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Qiaolin Township was established as Qiaolin Administrative Village. In 1952, it was split into Qiaobei Township and Qiaonan Township. Since 1958, it has been redivided into three administrative villages: Qiaodong Village, Qiaoxi Village, and Qiaonan Village. Their respective administrative departments have maintained this pattern to this day. The current population of residents surnamed Lin in Qiaolin is about 20,000, and the floating population is 120,000.

The Lin clan has established its local status in Jieyang from three aspects: establishing a historical and cultural village, utilizing overseas Chinese culture, and developing a characteristic economy. First, Qiaolin Township has 36 cultural relics and historic sites. It is not only a famous historical and cultural village in Jieyang City, but also rated as a famous historical and cultural village in Guangdong Province. Secondly, Qiaolin Township is the famous hometown of overseas Chinese in Jieyang City. During the Anti-Japanese War and the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country faced difficulties. The surnamed Lin who

were overseas Chinese provided tremendous support to the domestic tribe and the motherland. They were one of the important representatives who witnessed the development of Jieyang. Finally, Qiaolin Township has unique economic advantages. Qiaolin Township is one of the most important hardware processing bases in Jieyang City; Jieyang Qiaonan International Jade Market and Jieyang Ancient Qiao White Jade Market were established around 2007, which are key projects in Jiedong District, Jieyang. The street community where they live was awarded the honorary title of "Asia Jade Capital" by the Asian Jewelry Federation and the "China Jade Capital" by the China Light Industry Federation.

The Lin clan links their ancestor memories through cultural monuments, enhances modern influence through unique overseas Chinese culture, and enhances the local economic strength of the people of the surnamed Lin through the development of the characteristic economy. These actions are all working in the same direction, which is to strengthen the Lin clan's local status in Jieyang.

### 4) The organizational structure and social functions of the Lin clan

In the development of the past dynasties, the Lin clan has always supported the clan leader as the center of power to maintain the core interests of the clan. Until the emergence of the political party system during the Republic of China, the power of clan chiefs to control internal affairs of the clan gradually weakened. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it was transformed into a party system to lead everything. At this time, Qiaolin Township, where the Lin clan was located, was divided into three administrative villages, Qiaodong Village, Qiaoxi Village and Qiaonan Village. Their respective administrative agencies were called village offices. Since then, the Lin clan's integrated clan system has also been divided into three administrative villages. For three, move to management by local government agencies.

From the clan cultural heritage to becoming a representative of local culture

After the Lin clan came to Jieyang, it experienced political changes in several dynasties and is still able to continue to this day. It relies on the complete genealogical inheritance and the patriarch-centered organizational structure within the clan. They have also

cultivated a unique culture of their own - the Huolong Firework Ceremony. With the changes of the times, this ceremony has transformed from the clan's cultural heritage into a local cultural representative of Jieyang. Next, we will describe the formation process of how they shifted from internal to external expression.

#### 1) The courage to protect the country has become the source of the fireworks celebrations.

According to Lin Jiannan (1947), "Jieyang Historical Records" records the legends and stories spread by the Lin clan. As the legend has been told that: The Huolong Fireworks at Qiaolin originated during the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty. After the autumn harvest, most of the young and middle-aged people in Qiaolin went out to do business, and most of the people left behind were women and children, when the thief chief Liu Guohua gathered more than 100 outlaws to invade Qiaolin Township. Patriarch Jang Zhai immediately sent someone to the county government for help, and at the same time organized all the people of Qiaolin to fight hard.

At a time of crisis, Lin Xiaolong, the clan chief archer, put on an "arrow" with fire and shot the yellow flag with the dragon designs of the thieves, burning a large part of the flag. This disturbed the invaders' morale, and coincidentally, reinforcements sent by the county government also arrived, forming the attack from both inside and outside. The invaders were defeated and fled. All the villagers believed that Lin Xiaolong burned Liu Guohua's flag with one arrow at a critical moment, defeated the invaders, and safeguarded the peace of Qiaolin Township. This was a good sign to celebrate the peace of Qiaolin Township and it also coincided with the favorable weather and the bumper harvest of grain. The clans jointly advocated the use of Shaolong as a unique way to celebrate the peace of Qiaolin Township and pray for peace and contentment in the coming year. As a result, Shaolong was passed down to celebrate the victory. (Lin Hongzhang. interview, 2023) Therefore, Shaolong was passed down as a folk entertainment activity to celebrate the victory and pray for a good harvest in the coming year.

Juzhai Gong in the legend is the first-generation inheritor of Qiaolin Huolong Firework Ceremony. However, there is another record in "Jieyang County Chronicle" and "Qiao lin Genealogy" about the heroic deeds of the villagers of Qiaolin in fighting against "Jiu Jun", which further illustrates the spirit of the people surnamed Lin to bravely resist the enemy to defend their homeland. Emperor Kangxi granted a plaque of "Panlei Guqiao" as a commendation. Wendu Gong, then the head of the Lin clan, was the eighth-generation inheritor.

#### 2) The dominant actors who helped ensure the continuity of the Lin Clan

In this respect, I would like to suggest that the continuation of the Lin Family was not solely due to its proud history. But there was constructed by many people both within the Lin Clan and outsiders, as follows:

The village elders who were regarded as experts of the Lin Clan

They play an important role in telling stories to the next generation through rituals, media, etc. The first one is Mr. Lin Jiannan, a national intangible cultural heritage inheritor, who is 74 years old this year. There is also Mr. Lin Hongzhang, who is 76 years old and belongs to Qiaonan Village, who provided and told me the genealogy of the fourth branch of a big family with the surname Lin. Lin Shunjiang and Lin Xuran from Qiaodong Village are 76 and 71 years old respectively this year. Lin Shunjiang is the commander in charge of Qiaodong's ceremony process, and he is the most authoritative in the ceremony. Lin Xuran is the first Long lifter after the ceremony was re-held since the beginning of the Reform and Opening up, and he is the provider of the village ritual sacrificial text and other content. The last one is Mr. Lin Shuxian from Qiaoxi Village, who is 75 years old this year. He is one of the eye-touchers in the Qinglong Ceremony in Qiaoxi Village, and he is also the one with the highest seniority in the village. The five key informants above witnessed the

development and changes of the ceremony in Qiaolin after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Their memories shaped the views and memories of the ceremony of Huolong Fireworks in Qiaolin.

#### The Qiaolin Public Welfare Association

In 1999, the three villages of the surnamed Lin jointly established the Qiaolin Public Welfare Council (now Qiaolin Public Welfare Association). It conducts unified internal management of matters related to the collective common interests of the Lin clan, such as rebuilding family trees and renovating temples. It is also an organization that represents the Lin clan in Qiaolin to express externally. The main achievements are 1) It serves as the central point connecting the three villages, participating in providing information and revising Guqiao Township Chronicles. It is also the gathering point for the highest-ranking elders of the Lin clan to discuss the development and funds. 2) Contributing to making the Huolong Fireworks become a national intangible cultural heritage. 3) Make contributions to social welfare undertakings

The various organizations/agencies, both public and private, play an important role in the existence of Huolong Fireworks.

The Jieyang City Guqiao Township Chronicles Compilation Committee established in 1999 has verified *The Millennium Genealogy of the Fujian Linkai Clan*, *The Spectrum of the Genealogy of Lin's Fan Family Migration*, *Old and New Jieyang County Chronicles*, etc. The organization plays an important role in the verification of the migration of the Lin clan and the evolution of the history of the Huolong Fireworks. At the same time, the Lin family fully cooperated in the review to be able to refer to the credibility of those amendments as they have been certified by multiple government agencies. As Eberhard and Meskill said: many large clans modified their genealogies to link up with more powerful siblings, to reinforce family unity and privilege, and to seek protection from bureaucracy (Eberhard 1962:206-8; Meskill 1970:110).

In the village offices established in all three villages are responsible for managing the affairs of the village and daily public security. The village offices are all held by important people in the village, and they play a role of safety supervision and coordination in the Huolong Fireworks ceremonies held in each village, and they are also management units trusted and relied on by villagers.

In addition, tourists and the public play an important role in spreading the Huolong Fireworks to be widely known. This means telling and continuing the story of the Lin clan, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

#### 3) Reproduction of cultural practices

##### The production process of "Long"

The production of "Long" includes binding Long, sticking paper, painting, assembling, and connecting Long bodies, and gunpowder will be installed after the end of Youlong and Wulong. The Long is tied into a keel with thick bamboo strips; paper paste, after the keel is finished, has been pasted with translucent cotton silk paper; painting color, that is, painting scales, clouds, tai chi, and eight treasures on each Long section. Finally, the Long head, Long body and Long tail are connected into a whole Long of more than 30 meters. In the past, the Long would put lights and candles in the structure of each Long to make the Long shine. Now it has been developed to install batteries and light bulbs.





Figure 2 Make and tie the dragon head and the dragon tail , paste paper , paint eight treasures, install fireworks.

source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua □ January 18,2023 □



Figure 3 Assembly Long

Source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua □ January 17,2023 □

The ceremony processes

The reproduction of cultural practices here means that the three villages hold annual celebrations and have a distinct identity of their own. 5 important steps take 6 days in total. The following will briefly introduce the activity of the five main branches: Qinglong – Youlong – Wulong – Shaolong – Songlong.

(1) Qinglong. In the 12th month of the lunar calendar, when the Cailong is finished, the elders of the clan in the village will be responsible for choosing an auspicious day and Qinglong tour the whole township. First, Qinglong will hold a grand consecration.

(2) Youlong. The first time of Youlong is at the end of the year to bid farewell and welcome the New Year, while then Youlong on the first day of the first lunar month is to greet the Spring Festival. The Youlong team is led by Longzhu, and the young athletes are all in high spirits, followed by the Chaoshan big gongs and drums band, and there are respected old people and children in the villages. When the team arrives at a house of the village, the Youlong team stops to play music to celebrate the spring.

(3) Wulong. Wulong is a dance art with perfect performance and superb skills with the sense of mythological color. It happened during the day on the second day of the Lunar New year, in the small square of each village of Qiaolin. Wulong has ten main points of action, such as Longyouchun, Longxizhu, Panlongzhu, Chuanlongdeng, Longqiwu,

Longmenzhen, Longfangun, longpanzhuan, Longchuan Yue, Longtengfei and so on. Each has its own symbolic significance. For example, Longyouchun expresses that the time of the year is in the spring, which is the beginning of the year. I wish the country and the people a safe and prosperous New Year. Another example is Longmenzhen, Longmen is an auspicious gate; passing through Longmenzhen indicates that talents will come forth in large numbers. Longtengfei, which ends the formation, means to soar high into the sky, look at the world and create greater glories.

(4) Shaolong. The 10th day of the first lunar month is the sacred day for Shaolong, and it is also the most exciting part of the Spring Festival activities at Qiaolin. Qiaolin Township has a total of three villages : Qiaodong, Qiaoxi, and Qiaonan. Each village has a Shaolong ( burning the dragon) square, of which Shaolong Square of Qiaodong Village is located in the big square in front of Haizu Hall (the oldest clan ancestral hall in Qiaolin Township). Long (the dragon) used in burning, is called Caolong which was made of straw hundreds of years ago. Now it has been improved to insert all kinds of fireworks on the Long's ( the dragon's) body with bamboo strips to enhance its ornamental and visual shock.



Figure 4 The scene of the ritual activity of “Shaolong ”in Qiaonan Village

Source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua (February 17, 2016)



Figure 5 The scene of the ceremony held in Qiaodong Village

Source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua(January 31, 2023)

(5) Songlong. After the activity of Shaolong (burning the dragon), Long 's (the dragon's) “keels” will be sent back to the large ancestral halls. People will rush to grab the Long's whiskers and take them home to pray for the blessing of the Dragon God. Now, to maintain order and avoid accidents, the person in charge will first remove the beard from the Long's head, and after the activity is over, put the Long's beard on the small red envelopes, and villagers in need can go to the ancestral hall to collect it.

The impressive story, dominant actors, and reproduction of cultural practices mentioned above. It is an important way for local culture to be elevated to national heritage.



## Part 2 From Local Folk Culture to National Intangible Cultural Heritage

### 2.1 The cultural expression under the political system reform

From the birth of the Huolong Firework Ceremony to the founding of China in 1949, the Lin clan changed from an internal management method based on "autonomy" to a model of unified government management.

According to "Guqiao Township Chronicles", the country began the Land Reform Movement in 1950. To celebrate the people's liberation, the Qiaolin Wulong Team was invited to Shantou to perform. During this period, the country has experienced various reforms and movements. This is the only event held by the people of surnamed Lin in the nearly 30 years since the founding of new China to the Reform and Opening up, and it is a cross-city performance that represents local culture.

After the Reform and Opening up (1978), the country began to shift from a collective economy to an individual contract system, and people's lives gradually improved. After 1983, the Lin clan resumed the traditional cultural and entertainment activities of Youlong, Wulong and Shaolong. In 1985, on the third day of the first lunar month, eight Long from Qiaolin Township performed in Jieyang City. There were three Shaolong venues at that time, and the "Shaolong Huafeng" event was held at 8 pm on the tenth day of the first lunar month. Leaders at all levels of the city and county, compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao, overseas Chinese, neighboring counties, and urban and rural audiences in this county reached hundreds of thousands of people.

So far, the Qiaolin Huolong Firework Ceremony has been fully open to the public and has become a well-known local folk event. Since then, the three villages in Qiaolin have held the Qiaolin Huolong Firework ceremony almost every year.

### 2.2 Become a National Intangible Cultural Heritage

#### A clear line of inheritance

During the Ming Dynasty, Lin Juzhai, the head of the village, loved crafts since he was a child. He made a Long frame out of bamboo strips, pasted paper with colorful patterns to make a Long lantern, and accompanied it with drum music. He traveled around the countryside to show his success in resisting violence and invasion. Later, it evolved into a folk custom, which symbolizes victory and bravery. It is used to celebrate the harvest and pray for good weather and peace in the country and the people in the coming year. After that, Lin Xiangnan organized technical experts in the countryside to develop Long lanterns and used silk cloth as the Long body to make the Long image more lifelike. At the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, Lin Wendu organized the production of Caifeng lanterns to enrich the activities of Youlong and Wulong to match "Long Feng Cheng Xiang", and unified the colors of the Long lanterns in each area of the Lin clan so that the Long in the whole township were red, yellow, green, white, and other colors are colorful and eye-catching.

During the Republic of China, Lin Qinjun, Lin Qinjian, Lin Ziba, etc. organized large-scale tide bands, accompanied by Youlong and Wulong, to enhance the atmosphere of the event. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Lin Jiannan, Lin Qinri, and Lin Yichang summarized the experiences and lessons learned from setting off Huolong fireworks in the past and studied the method of installing fireworks on the Long's body to make the setting off Huolong fireworks more dazzling and safer. Qiaolin Huolong Fireworks has been passed down for 24 generations.

#### Inherited value and influence

Qiaolin Huolong Fireworks has been passed down in an orderly manner for more than 600 years. It has many connotations such as spiritual value, social value, artistic value, and

research value, which is also its advantage in becoming a national-level intangible cultural heritage.

Qiaolin Huolong Firework is a kind of folk belief. It is this spiritual power that inspires the people and is the spiritual value of the times. In terms of social value, it has become a part of social life with the development of the times. People express their love and hate, express their fighting spirit through rituals, and express their vision of peace and prosperity for the country and the people, and prosperity of all industries. It is also an important link that connects hometown and kinship, unites the hearts and minds of overseas Chinese, and enhances the harmony and unity of neighbors, and overseas Chinese. It plays an important role in building a harmonious society. In terms of artistic value, Qiaolin Huolong Fireworks has a unique style, strong and heroic expressive power; its movement language is free and concise, and its group sports formations are changeable, so it has high artistic value. In addition, Qiaolin Huolong Fireworks involves many disciplines such as dance, folklore, totem culture, Chaoshan music, and martial arts, and has important research value.

#### Successful declaration of intangible cultural heritage

Beginning in 2003, China's intangible cultural heritage protection work was officially launched. In 2007, Qiaolin Huolong Firework took Qiaolin Township, Pandong Town, Dongshan District, Jieyang City as the project protection unit. The project category was "Folk Dance", and it was successfully applied to become an intangible cultural heritage in Dongshan District, Jieyang City. It was promoted in April of the same year. Jieyang municipal intangible cultural heritage project. In November, it was further promoted to a Guangdong provincial-level intangible cultural heritage project. The project category is "Traditional Dance" and included in the expanded project types of Wulong. It was successfully declared as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage site in June 2008.

The completion of the application from district level to national level intangible cultural heritage in two years shows that the Lin clan is very proactive in making this change and expects to be recognized by the highest authority, thereby enhancing society's recognition of the Lin clan. Starting from the declaration of National Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Lin clan adjusted the original project protection unit to Jieyang Pandong Qiaolin Charity Association. Jieyang Pandong Qiaolin Public Welfare Association obtained the qualification of the Wulong (Qiaolin Huolong Firework) project protection unit in November 2019. This is different from the Project Protection Application Unit also filled in when applying. The former belongs to the output unit of the representative, while the latter is further official confirmation of Qiaolin Public Welfare Association as a protection unit and affirmation of its ability to protect intangible cultural heritage.

#### External cultural exchange and online media display

After Qiao Lin Huolong Firework became a national intangible cultural heritage, it has been continuously invited to perform in other places and film TV shows. In 2008, he participated in the Guangdong Satellite TV Entertainment Shengping Spring Festival Gala and the closing ceremony of the Guangdong International Tourism and Culture Festival. In 2009, he participated in the opening ceremony performance of the first Jieyang Characteristic Culture Festival. In 2010, he participated in the Shanghai World Expo and Guangdong Event Week. In 2011, he participated in the opening ceremony performance of Guangdong International Tourism and Culture Festival. In June 2012, Qiao Lin Huolong Firework won the "Guangdong Longwu Online Show Jinlong Award" and the "Best Popularity Award" issued by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Culture. In 2013, he participated in various special activities organized by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Culture to produce the 100-episode series "Exploring Inheritance", which received high attention and praise from the society. Including being selected for the "Beautiful China 2014 China Report Spring Festival Gala" program. At the same time, Shantou TV station in Chaoshan area conducted a 7-minute exclusive interview report on Qiao Lin's Huolong Firework Ceremony in 2017. In 2021, a Huolong model was donated

to the Jieyang Museum for use in the display of "Light of Culture - Jieyang Cultural Heritage Exhibition" to promote Jieyang's excellent folk art, which was highly praised by many tourists and experts.

The Lin clan reconstructed the local ritual space and used its own cultural charm to attract many modern online media to live broadcast and news reports on site. The ceremony space is extended so that people across the city, province, and even the whole country can feel the warm atmosphere of the ceremony at the same time. These successive social concerns have also indirectly strengthened the Lin clan's identification with the Qiao Lin Huolong Firework Ceremony. This process has promoted communication and understanding between villages, cities, and provinces. The Shanghai World Expo and the Guangdong International Tourism and Culture Festival have promoted Qiaolin Huolong Firework internationally.

### Part Three: 2023 Huolong Firework Ceremony Case

#### 3.1 Expression of Huolong Firework ceremony Space

Youlong and Wulong had arrived.

The long formation of Youlong and Wulong consisted of all members of the Lin Clan. Before moving the parade, the highest generation of elders in the family at the forefront of the first procession will splash 'Fairy Water' to wash away any bad things. Then he holds the brocade flag with the words 'National Intangible Cultural Heritage Jieyang Qiaolin Dragon Dance Team' on it. Followed by five square flag team, old people team, two Fenghuang (phoenixes), Liyu(carp) team, two Long (dragons) and drum team. The number of people in the Long team and the order of each position in Qiaolin three villages are based on the order of each village.



Figure 6 Qiaonan Village holds the scene of Youlong at night

Source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua(January 22, 2023)

This team this year was even bigger than what I saw in 2016. The old people team at the forefront of Youlong's team wore light yellow Tang suits, the women wore red cheongsams, and the other team members all wore collectively customized full-body red sportswear. The team of Youlong can be said to be a long red the Long (dragon) , stretching nearly 300 meters. It can be seen from the expressions of every participant at the scene that they are extremely proud of being able to participate in the team. The team was in high spirits amidst the sound of gongs and drums resounding throughout the village, and the Long carriers swayed and danced with the sound of gongs and drums. Firecrackers will be set off to congratulate each villager's residence or shops run by the villagers when the team of Youlong passes by. The Youlong team will then make a running action in response. If you go to the crossroads, there will be a Wulong performance, and more villagers will gather to watch. There are families from the village, some parents with children, and some

boys and girls come in groups. They shared and exchanged the pride and memory of the Qiaolin clan.

#### Route of Youlong and Wulong ceremonies

The Youlong road map of the three villages was drawn through this year's field tracking with the help of villagers surnamed Lin. It can be seen from the picture above that during the tour of Wulong, Qiaodong Village completed the red route, Qiaoxi Village completed the blue route, and Qiaonan Village completed the yellow route. According to field observations, the ceremony team took 6 days to complete Youlong and Wulong, and walked through the roads in the areas to which their respective villages belong. During the period, they passed through five places, namely Shuangzhong Temple, Lin's Ancestral Hall, Mazu Temple, Dafeng Patriarch's Palace and Guandi Palace. They are the gods of the common belief of the Lin clan, and they hold a very high position in the hearts of all the Lin clan.

Paul Connerton (Connerton, 1989) referred to ceremonies as the area where social memory is most visible and powerful. Like the Huolong Ceremony at Qiao Lin, Qiaolin is a township located in Jieyang City, Guangdong Province, west of the west gate of Rongcheng District, Pandong Town, on the bank of the North River of the Rongjiang River. People surnamed Lin came here from Hantou, Putian, Fujian Province to create their hometown during the Southern Song Dynasty. So, the grand resurgence of the parade after being interrupted by COVID-19 and chose to move the parade through the five important places of the Lin Clan, thus signifying the awakening of The Lin Clan's "Ownership of Space" ignited again.

#### 3.2 Ceremony time and space compression

The compression of time and space is an important phenomenon, which points out the major problem of the concentrated explosion of rituals at a certain time and place after going through different historical stages. The case of the Huolong Firework Ceremony in 2023 shows us how the Huolong Firework Ceremony combines past and present ritual phenomena that occurred within the boundaries of the Lin clan in Qiao Lin. This is a superimposed space and time, superimposed space, and time, which preserves the memory of the present and the past. The three Lin villages all held Shaolong ceremonies at the same time and within the boundaries of the Lin clan. The Shaolong ceremony scene showed the ritual elements that people surnamed Lin added or adjusted to the ceremony in different historical periods. After the ceremony became a national intangible cultural heritage, ritual elements with national identity were also adjusted into it. At the same time, this space, which compresses history and people of different ages and identities, has become a carrier for the Lin clan to construct their own identity and external representation.

In the context of national intangible cultural heritage, the person surnamed Lin who held the ceremony, and the government officials, media, tourists, scholars, and other people who watched the ceremony at the scene. They were all gathered in the same ceremonial space and witnessed the live presentation of ritual elements representing traditional and modern elements at the same time. Such as the traditional gong and drum troupe, the large banner embroidered with the words "National Intangible Cultural Heritage", the participation of women, etc. This cultural phenomenon reveals the latest round of self-identity construction by the Lin clan through the Huolong Firework ceremony. They retain traditional ritual elements and incorporate new modern features to externally represent their profound history and culture, national cultural identity and cultural spirit that keeps pace with the times. Importantly, incorporating new elements into the characterization further strengthens his identity as a member of the Lin clan.



Figure 7 Shaolong scene in Qiaodong Village

Source: Filmed from Lyu Zhanhua(January 24, 2023)

### 3.3 Ceremony space extension in the context of intangible cultural heritage

On February 1, 2023, local official media such as Jieyang Daily and the official website of Jieyang Municipal People's Government published reports about the Qiaolin Huolong Fireworks. Sohu released "Super Burning!" on Shaolong that night. Qiao Lin Huolong Firework dances for nine days again tonight." The article made online network statistics and wrote an article "That night, the 'Jieyang Mobile Station' APP, 'Jieyang Radio and Television' WeChat video account, and 'Jieyang Radio and Television' Douyin account under Jieyang Radio and Television Station broadcast the event simultaneously across the entire network. That night, more than 2.65 million people watched online, the audience interacted enthusiastically and left many enthusiastic comments!" On the same day, the People's Daily client, a national media outlet, released "Visual Feast, the Giant Dragon's Fire Breathing Show in Jieyang, Guangdong is Lively" reports on the spectacular scene of Qiao Lin Shaolong in Jieyang, with 148,000 views. On February 2, CCTV Financial Channel reported on the grand performance of Qiaolin Shaolong from Jieyang City.

In addition to the official reports listed above, there are also many self-media, tourism information networks, various financial networks and other media that are doing live broadcasts on the scene and have made relevant reports. From the titles of the above news reports, we can see different expressions. As a local district report, it emphasizes local "intangible cultural heritage" culture. Reports from Jieyang City expressed the role of the Qiaolin Huolong Firework Ceremony in local culture, as a symbol of the end of the three-year epidemic and ushering in new development. The People's Daily, which is a national identity, borrowed the local culture of Jieyang, Guangdong, with the words "dragon spitting fire". This expresses the dual meaning of highlighting China's dragon culture and "breathing fire" to eliminate the epidemic virus and shows the country's attitude towards culture to other provinces and regions in China. CCTV Financial Network uses "Festival" and "Lantern Festival" to increase people's information hints about the economic market. This continued attention has further strengthened the self-identity of the villagers of the Lin clan.



## **Discussion**

According to the study, the Huolong Firework ceremony underwent significant changes after being recognized as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage. The ceremony began to reflect the Lin clan's varying needs for self-identity and representation in different historical contexts. One key change observed was the shift in the focus of the ceremony. Before recognition, the ceremony mainly focused on the ritual practice itself, with less emphasis on its significance and meaning. However, after recognition, the Lin clan started to emphasize the ceremony's cultural importance, historical significance, and its role in the community's identity and heritage.

Furthermore, the ceremony also underwent changes in terms of its scale and organization. The Lin clan started to invite more outsiders to participate in the ceremony, including government officials and tourists. This was done to showcase the ceremony's cultural significance and to promote tourism in the region. The ceremony also became more organized, with formal procedures and regulations put in place to ensure its smooth execution. The Huolong Firework ceremony's recognition as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage led to significant changes in its focus, organization, and significance. These changes reflect the Lin clan's different needs for self-identity and representation in the context of China's evolving political and cultural landscape.

The Huolong Firework ceremony was a crucial element in shaping the Lin clan's local identity and representation through ritual, encompassing both daily life and ceremonial expression. The ceremony is deeply rooted in the Lin clan's culture and history, and its observance reflects the clan's social relations, beliefs, and values. One way in which the ceremony shaped the Lin clan's identity was through its utilization of symbols and imagery. For instance, the ceremony employed the dragon as a symbol of power, strength, and good fortune, mirroring the aspirations and values of the Lin clan. Additionally, the use of fireworks in the ceremony symbolized the clan's ability to overcome challenges and obstacles, as well as their exuberance and happiness. The Huolong Firework ceremony was also closely intertwined with the Lin clan's everyday life and social structure. The participation of various clan members, including elders, youth, and children, reinforced the clan's social bonds and sense of community, and bolstered their collective identity. The ceremony was an integral part of the Lin clan's rites of passage. This reinforced the clan's sense of tradition and continuity and provided a means for the younger generations to connect with their cultural heritage.

The Huolong Firework ceremony is not only a cultural practice but also a way for the Lin clan to connect with their ancestors and preserve their cultural identity. The ceremony is a symbol of unity and solidarity within the community, as it brings people together to celebrate and honor their shared heritage. It also serves to pass down traditional knowledge and skills from one generation to the next, ensuring that the cultural practices of the Lin clan will continue to thrive in the future.

In recent years, the Huolong Firework ceremony has gained attention and recognition beyond the local community, attracting tourists and scholars who are interested in learning more about this unique cultural tradition. Efforts have been made to preserve and promote the ceremony, including the establishment of cultural centers and the organization of cultural events and performances. These initiatives have helped to raise awareness of the Huolong Firework ceremony and its significance, ensuring that it will continue to be an important part of the cultural landscape of Jieyang City for generations to come.

## **Conclusion**

The transformation of the Jieyang Qiaolin Huolong Firework Ceremony from a local folk tradition to a national intangible cultural heritage reflects the Lin clan's quest for self-identity and self-expression. This study reveals that the Huolong Firework rituals serve as

a means for the Lin clan to assert their identity and communicate it to themselves, their family, the local community, the nation, and tourists. Furthermore, the evolving role and significance of the Huolong Firework ceremony, which has been recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage, has provided the Lin clan with political and cultural influence. The ceremony has been utilized and adapted by national and local governments, shaping the definition, boundaries, and reorganization of cultural power. The ritual serves as a vessel for preserving and transmitting the cultural identity and traditions of the Lin clan, with different functions and meanings within the family, local community, national level, and as a representation to the outside world.

Moreover, the research indicates that the Lin clan constructs its identity through rituals, which evolves over time and in response to external recognition. In the realm of cultural politics, being recognized as an intangible cultural heritage bestows a certain identity on a culture. Cultures that have not received this recognition may be marginalized, limiting their original living space. However, in the case of the Huolong Firework ceremony, there is no evidence of exclusion; instead, it demonstrates a process of integration. Additionally, the Huolong Firework ceremony embodies both communal and individual characteristics. It serves as a means of preserving and reinforcing the history, traditions, and values of the community, while also providing individuals with a profound sense of connection to the entire community, fostering a strong communal bond.

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