

# Multicultural Heritage of "Min-Taiwan King-sending Boat" in the Digital Age

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**Abstract:** As a kind of folk beliefs and religious ceremonies that are mainly prevalent in south China and southeast Asian Chinese communities, the inscription of "sending the king's boat" into the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has its specific theoretical concerns and practical significance. In this paper, we take the intangible cultural heritage of "Min-Taiwan King Sending Boat" in Zhongshan Village, Haicang District, Xiamen, Fujian Province as an example, analyse the current situation of the development of intangible cultural heritage and its dilemmas through a field visit, and explore the new cultural connotations of "Min-Taiwan King Sending Boat" under the present digital era, and explore the advantages of the internet and the Xiamen tourism market to promote the development of intangible cultural heritage in Xiamen, Fujian Province. It explores the new cultural connotation of "Fujian-Taiwan King-sending Boat" in the present digital era, and explores the possibility of diversifying its inheritance by taking advantage of the Internet and Xiamen tourism market.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Heritage; Digital Age; Sending the King's Boat; Cultural Connotation

## 1. Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage, or "ICH" for short, is an important cultural deposit of a country

and a nation, the basis for interpreting a country's and a nation's cultural identity and displaying its cultural individuality, and the spiritual destination of a nation's and a nation's self-respect and self-confidence. As Fujian and Taiwan are separated by the sea, many intangible cultural heritages share a common historical origin, and these cultural heritages have also become a common cultural bond to deepen the understanding of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, to enhance the feelings of the two sides, and a cultural foundation to maintain national unity. In today's digital age, the Internet is a new form of cultural communication with unique cultural values and the emergence of various new media and information technology, which should serve as an important platform for the dissemination and preservation of intangible cultural heritage. However, the reality is that ICH is rich in cultural resources, and the means of digitalisation and information dissemination of resources are relatively backward and single.

## 2. Dissemination of the "Min-Taiwan King Sending Boat"

Wang Boat is also known as "Jiao" and "Wangchuan". Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Philosophy researcher Jiang Shoucheng testified that the "Wang Jiao" is "Jiao", to remove the disease. Ancient not only in China's southeast coast prevalent in the Jingchu river areas also have "sacrificial plague" and "send the plague boat" ceremony,

with the plague epidemic, by the water and the rise. The cost of the Jiao ceremony is mainly raised by local residents through extensive fund-raising, and the construction of both the residence of the main god of the Jiao, the king, his entourage, and the king's boat for the parade is a fusion of the ancient bureaucratic ritual system and the imagination of the present life, and is closely related to the sea-going customs of the people of Fujian and Taiwan since the beginning of the tradition.

In Xiamen, the custom of "sending the king's boat"[1] survives mainly in the communities of Xiamen Harbour, Taipu, He Chu, Pukou, Zhongzhai, Fanghu, Zhongshan, Shitang, Haicang, Xin'aun, Lvcuo, Houcun, and the five districts of Siming, Huli, Haicang, Xiang'an, and Tong'an. Within the boundary of Zhangzhou, along the Jiulong River, the custom of "Wang Boat" has been passed down in Xiangcheng District and Longwen District of Zhangzhou, and in Fugong Town, Gangwei Town, Jiaomei Town and Zilong Town of Longhai City. Within the boundaries of Quanzhou, the custom of the "King Boat" is mainly distributed in the Li Cheng District and Fengze District of Quanzhou, Shenhu Town and Dongshi Town of Jinjiang, and Xiangzhi Town of Shishi. In Taiwan, the custom of "king boat" mainly originates from Fujian immigrants, and is widely distributed in Miaoli, Beimen, Changhua, Chiayi, Lugang, Kaohsiung, Beimen, and Guiren in Tainan and Taichung. Of course, the practice of the "Wang Boat" belief can also be divided into the watersheds of Zengwen Creek, Bazhong Creek, Piaozi Creek, Erren Creek, Donggang Creek, and the outlying islands of Kinmen/Pescadores/Matsu, and so on.

Urban and rural communities, folk groups and inherited artists are the main carriers of the king boat ceremony. For example, in Xiamen's Zhongzhai She community, the quadrennial Bun Ceremony of the King's Boat is led by non-hereditary inheritor Zhong Qingfeng, who sits in on the building of the King's Boat; the King's Boat Ceremony in Hecuo is presided over by Shi Dexin; and in Putian's Boxing City, there is Lin Qingsen, a craftsman of paper-tied dragon boats and King's Boats. The craftsmanship of these inheritors of the king boat is different, some inherited from the family craft, some from the modern shipbuilding industry and return to the ancient

shipbuilding process of research, but all contain the love of this craft and the defence of tradition.

The people of Southern Fujian were born to the sea and have been advancing bravely, and after crossing Taiwan, they are heading further south. The migration of the people from Fujian and Guangdong had a specific psychological environment. Chen Da points out that the traditional coastal inhabitants of southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong [2], no matter where they migrated to, were particularly interested in adapting to their natural and social environments, and that the townspeople's idea was very simple: not only did they need to adapt to temperature, humidity, agriculture and commerce, but they also needed to adapt to the many forces that they could not find an explanation for, in order to maintain their peace and to avoid misfortune and good fortune. This partly explains why the Min Chinese, after moving overseas, brought ceremonies and customs such as "sending the king's boat" to the countries where they lived [3].

### 3. Current Status and Problems of the Heritage

Although the "Min-Taiwan King Sending Boat" was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage many years ago, there are still many deficiencies in its inheritance, dissemination and protection [4].

#### 3.1 The Awkward Situation of Having no One to Follow in the Footsteps of the Inheritors

The main character of the "Min-Taiwan Wang Boat Delivery" event [5], the Wang Boat, needs to be handcrafted using the ancient techniques of boat building, painting and relief carving, and the construction time is roughly 4-5 months. Although the craft has been successfully passed down from generation to generation, it is an indisputable fact that the number of professional craftsmen is scarce and there is a lack of successors as they are getting older. At present, Fujian and Taiwan Wang Boat identified as the inheritor of three people, such as Xiamen City, Zhongzhai Village Wang Boat inheritor Zhong Qingfeng has 78 years old. The Wang Boat craft is generally passed down from father to son or from master to disciple, and the experience of making boats

needs to be accumulated over a long period of time. In reality, even if it can be inherited, due to the complicated and complex boat-making process, the production process is long and arduous, the order is small, low income, can not make a living, the general public is reluctant to engage in this work. The inheritor faces the embarrassing situation of having no or too few disciples.

### **3.2 Low Frequency of the "King Boat" Folklore Event**

As a result of the accelerated process of urbanisation in recent years, the space and time available for holding folklore events have been decreasing, and the means of dissemination have been single and insufficient. In terms of time, except for the "sending the king's boat" folklore activities held once every two or three years, there is no trace of such activities at other times. In terms of space, folklore activities need a large space for activities, and the number of participants in the "Min-Taiwan King Boat Delivery" activity is large, which requires a large space for activities; the king boat needs to take up the highway for its patrol, which involves the problem of traffic congestion and control in the city. Finally, the danger factor of "burning the king boat" is higher, requiring a large open and safe space, which has higher requirements for fire fighting and urban environmental protection.

### **3.3 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

Non-legacy culture has been passed down from ancient times to the present day, and it has a certain background of the times. Take the "king-sending boat" as an example. In ancient times, productivity was low, and the level of science and technology could not be compared with today's. Fishermen in the coastal areas did not have weather forecasts or predictions of fish distribution, and depended entirely on the weather. Therefore, the ancients held activities to pray for the king - the god in the king's ship "on behalf of the sky patrol", to bless the wind and rain, and get a good harvest. Secondly, when the plague and death came, people were at their wits' end and could only rely on the king's help, hoping that their people would be healthy and safe. Nowadays, the background of the times has changed, fish can be farmed, fishing is backed by high-tech means, most of

the plague epidemics are controllable and curable, and the need to rely on God to eat, pray for God's blessing of the faith is greatly reduced. In the eyes of today's young generation, this kind of praying for God's blessing of folk activities is more like a kind of superstitious activities with no practical significance, and their participation in folk activities is more from the father's request, out of the fun to see the mentality of watching. So, how to pass on and spread the non-heritage culture that is detached from the background of the times? This raises a very realistic and urgent question for us.

With the opening of the "Little Three Links" across the Taiwan Strait [6], more and more Taiwanese compatriots and clansmen will return to their hometowns to take part in the activity of "sending the king's boat" every time, and in fact, this activity has already become a kind of important cultural bond, which can be exploited for the purpose of "sending the king's boat to Fujian and Taiwan". This activity has actually become an important cultural bond, which can be used to explore the traditional cultural connotation of "sending the king's boat from Fujian to Taiwan", enhance the sense of identity of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as one family, and promote the harmonious development of cross-strait cultural exchanges. This is of inestimable significance in strengthening the centripetal force and cohesion of the Chinese nation. Against this background, how to make use of the new technological means[7] in the present digital era to protect and widely disseminate the non-heritage culture shared by both sides of the Taiwan Strait provides a good research direction for us to carry out our work.

### **4. The "Min-Taiwan King Sending Ship" in the Digital Age**

In the 21st century, in the era of "Internet Plus", "digital" technology has become a key tool for the preservation of non-heritage culture [8]. Digital preservation means using the methods and means of digital technology to preserve, protect, disseminate and enhance the cultural resources of non-heritage under the premise of respecting the original form of non-heritage culture. With the advancement of information technology, especially digital photography, three-dimensional information acquisition, high-fidelity holographic storage technology,

virtual reality, multimedia and broadband network technology, digital preservation provides strong support, especially for cultural heritage, particularly intangible cultural heritage.

The intervention of digital media technologies not only contributes to the preservation and development of traditional culture, but also breaks the closure between different cultures and provides new opportunities for cultural exchange and development. Various cultural contents, such as words, music, graphics and images, have gradually formed globally shared cultural resources through digital media, facilitating the global dissemination of cultural achievements and making them widely known and accepted.

The following are some diversified inheritance strategies for the folklore activity of "sending the king's boat to Fujian and Taiwan".

#### **4.1 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

It is crucial to deeply explore the connotation of the "Min-Taiwan King-sending Boat" folklore in the new era, so that it can be passed on from generation to generation across the strait and around the globe. Non-heritage culture needs to keep up with the times and integrate into the context of the times, otherwise it will be gradually forgotten. The original ceremony of "sending the king's boat" was intended to ward off epidemics and pray for peace.

Nowadays, this folklore has evolved into an appeal for cultural and ecological protection, in line with the General Secretary's emphasis that "when ecology flourishes, civilisation flourishes; when the ecology declines, the civilisation declines". Chinese civilisation has a long history and has nurtured a rich ecological culture, which is the common cultural foundation of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Passing on the non-heritage culture is actually passing on the profound connotations, encouraging more people to participate in the construction of ecological civilisation and care about environmental management, so as to beautify our common home. When the non-heritage culture is in tune with the context of the times, it will certainly be revitalised and passed on for eternity. This will help the folklore of the "Min-Taiwan King Sending Boat" to continue to be passed on in

this day and age, and contribute to the construction of an ecological civilisation, making our homes more beautiful.

#### **4.2 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

The government needs to increase financial support and policy promotion for the "Fujian-Taiwan King-sending Boat" non-heritage cultural project, actively stimulate the enthusiasm of the inheritors, and promote the inheritance of skills and cultural exchanges.

First of all, it is necessary to increase economic investment to encourage the inheritors to demonstrate their skills, improve their skills, train apprentices, and even set up studios to carry out cultural exchanges and dissemination. Special allocations can be made for learning and training, and co-operation with colleges and universities can also be made to cultivate a new generation of inheritors and attract more talented young people to participate in the inheritance of non-genetic heritage.

Secondly, a sound mechanism for the protection of inheritors should be established to assist them in collating information on their skills [9], provide places for teaching, and organise various seminars, exhibitions, publicity and exchange activities. At the same time, it should formulate policies for assessing and rewarding inheritors, and encourage representative inheritors to pass on their skills to their apprentices and continuously improve their skills, so that they can feel satisfied and motivated in the process of inheriting.

Finally, the Government should also introduce policies to encourage Taiwanese inheritors to set up training centres and conduct in-depth studies and exchanges with the inheritors, reflecting the borderlessness of culture and the common source of cross-strait culture. This will help strengthen cross-strait cultural ties and interactions, and promote the inheritance and development of the "Min-Taiwan King-sending Boat" intangible cultural heritage.

#### **4.3 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

Advanced virtual reality technology and digital photography [10] are used to recreate the appearance, materials and production process of the King's Ship. Among them, holographic interferometry is an emerging technology that uses holographic photography for

interferometric measurement to achieve high-precision, non-contact and non-destructive measurements, which has several advantages over traditional optical interferometric measurement.

General optical metrology methods are only applicable to relatively simple and smooth surface objects, while holographic metrology technology can be used for high-precision measurement of any shape and roughness of the object, and its measurement accuracy can reach the level of light wavelength. Since holographic images have three-dimensional characteristics, using holographic technology allows objects with complex shapes to be observed from multiple viewpoints and analysed through interferometry. Considering the complex structure of the King's Ship, especially its imitation of the ancient "Blessed Ship" model, including the masts, sails, miniature palace buildings, as well as rich paintings and reliefs, holographic metrology technology will be used to measure various parts and create an accurate three-dimensional digital model for three-dimensional rendering and animation. In addition, digital photography technology will be used to record the entire process of the craftsmen making the King's Boat, enabling a full digital record. This will maximise the recreation of the production process, generating textual information such as drawings and process descriptions for archiving.

#### **4.4 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

Using Internet technology and new media means, it widely promotes and disseminates the folklore activity of "sending king boats to Fujian and Taiwan", and at the same time creates related king boat handicrafts, documentaries, toys and other derivative commodities. Through the innovative means of new media, the expression of non-heritage culture is constantly enriched, and high-tech elements are fully integrated to adapt to the trend of Internet communication and shorten the distance between the non-heritage culture and the public, so that the non-heritage culture can be widely disseminated, and the problems of a single mode of dissemination, insufficient coverage and depth are overcome. The expression of non-heritage culture through new media communication means is more attractive

and affinity, which is recognised by the judges and the audience. The animation is now broadcast on major video platforms and has achieved good communication effects. On this basis, we can draw on the successful case of the development of tourist crafts in the Forbidden City in Beijing to develop products such as childlike Q-version of the king and the king's boat, and to produce VR visual non-heritage folklore activity experience promotional films, so that people can better understand the value of culture in a relaxed and interactive experience. This innovative approach helps to bring the "Min-Taiwan King Boat Delivery" folklore activity into the lives of more people, and promotes cultural inheritance and dissemination.

#### **4.5 Changing Needs of the Times Make Less Attention**

Make full use of the advantages of coastal tourist cities to establish regional "non-heritage cultural tourism", attracting tourists to actively participate in non-heritage cultural and folklore activities, so as to achieve the goal of cultural inheritance. The scientific and rational development and application of non-heritage cultural resources in the tourism industry not only enriches the diversity of urban tourism products, but also helps to protect and pass on non-heritage. As early as in August 2009, the Ministry of Culture and the National Tourism Administration jointly issued the Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Combined Development of Culture and Tourism, stressing the importance of "taking advantage of the resources of intangible cultural heritage and developing cultural tourism products", and in July 2010, the General Office of the Ministry of Culture and the Office of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage once again cooperated to issue the Circular on Grasping the Correct Orientation and Doing a Good Job in Protecting and Developing Cultural Heritage, calling for the protection of cultural heritage in a conservation-oriented manner and the development of cultural heritage. Notice", which requires that under the premise of protection, cultural heritage resources should be fully utilised and reasonably developed, so as to give full play to their roles in raising local popularity, expanding social influence, promoting local economic growth, etc., and facilitating the transformation of the mode of

economic development.

Non-heritage cultural tourism requires the selection of non-heritage items with strong local characteristics and the creation of tourism products that are short-term, approachable and focus on interaction and leisure nature. For example, in some popular tourist and commercial attractions, such as Zhongshan Road in Xiamen, it is possible to build a "Fujian-Taiwan King Sending Boat" NRM cultural exhibition hall or NRM cultural dissemination centre, and to attract tourists to experience the charm and value of the NRM tourism by showing them a VR virtual reality tour. Such measures can help integrate non-heritage culture into the tourism industry, allowing more people to participate in the inheritance of non-heritage, while at the same time enhancing the attractiveness of tourism products.

### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the national intangible cultural heritage "Min-Taiwan King-sending Boat", rooted in Fujian and Taiwan, the coasts of South China and Southeast Asian countries, has an important and unique culture of maritime rituals. Nowadays, it has evolved into an important platform for connecting Fujian and Taiwan, promoting the construction of ecological civilisation and strengthening folk cultural exchanges. However, in the context of the new era, the "King Sending Boat" is facing the problem of inheritance, the lack of successors, the decrease in the number of people participating in it, and the limitation of its activities. Therefore, it is necessary for us to re-explore its new cultural connotation and study how to use information technology to diversify the inheritance and protection of this cultural heritage in the digital age. At the same time, with the booming trend of Xiamen's tourism market, it is possible to create a regional non-heritage folklore tourism project and make it a regular, high-quality, product-oriented tourism experience, thus achieving a win-win situation in terms of preservation and effective use.

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