



CHANGES OF COMMUNITY CULTURE OF LANTERN ART IN SHICHENG OF JIANGXI

2007 - 2024



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2025

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2007 - 2024



A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of DOCTOR OF ARTS

(D.A. (Arts and Culture Research))

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THE DISSERTATION TITLED

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BY

ZHONG ZHIZHAO

HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Objective: This study aims to systematically analyze the evolutionary trajectory, driving forces, and socio-cultural impacts of the lantern art in Shicheng County, Jiangxi Province, from 2007 to 2024. Methods: This study adopts a qualitative research approach, integrating multiple research strategies: 1) Historical research. 2) Comparative research. 3) Fieldwork. 4) Interview research. Results: The study finds that Shicheng lantern art has undergone significant transformation over the past 17 years, driven by the interplay of multiple forces such as craft inheritance, community participation, institutional involvement, and policy guidance. Three core findings are revealed: 1) Driving forces and contradictions of change. 2) Multi-dimensional socio-cultural impacts. 3) Evolution of identity and relations. Conclusion: The study demonstrates that Shicheng lantern art is not a static heritage but a dynamic cultural system deeply embedded in local society and continuously interacting with the external environment. Its contemporary vitality depends on its successful integration into daily practices, social relations, and governance structures. Currently, Shicheng lantern art stands at a critical crossroads between "branding development" and "connotative inheritance."

Keyword : Shicheng lantern art, community culture, cultural identity, Hakka culture

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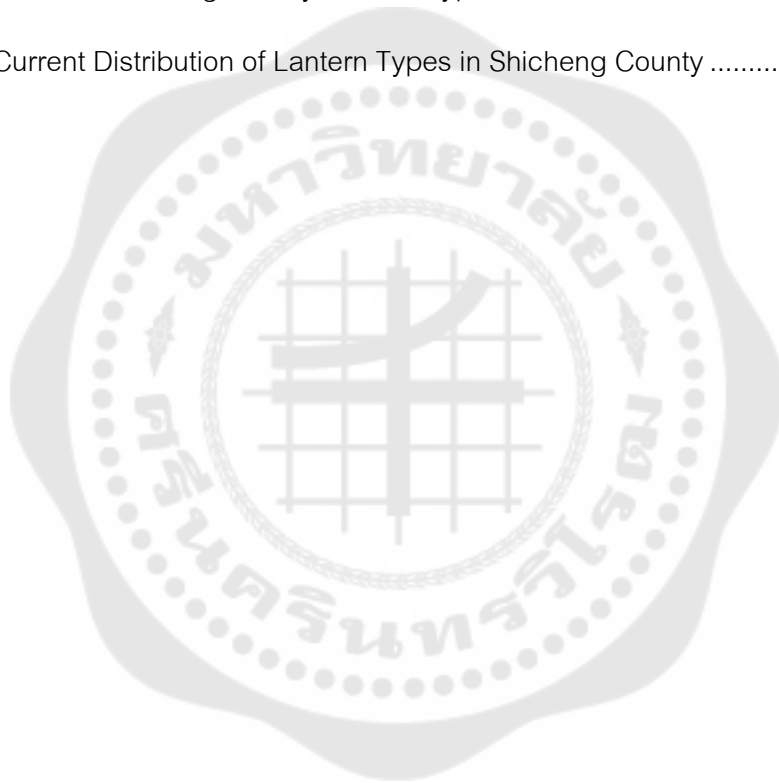
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The reason for choosing Shicheng Lanterns as the research subject lies in two aspects. Firstly, Shicheng Lanterns boast a long history and are a significant component of Hakka cultural art. As a Hakka myself, I'm eager to introduce this beautiful culture with distinctive regional features to the public. Secondly, with the development of the social economy and the influence of foreign cultures, Shicheng Lanterns went through a "slump" in 2000. Through referring to historical materials and research findings, I decided to interpret the culture of Shicheng Lanterns from the perspectives of cultural transformation and community identity, aiming to make it better understood and favored by more people for the purpose of documenting and protecting it.



Figure 1 Tea Basket Lantern and Dragon Lantern.

Source: The third lantern festival art festival of Shicheng County.

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"Lanterns" are also known as "Festive Lanterns". They not only have practical functions in daily life but also are the crystallization of the wisdom of folk culture. The tradition of hanging flower lanterns dates back to the Western Han Dynasty under Emperor Wu in the Central Plains region. On the 15th day of the first lunar month, during sacrificial ceremonies, people would hang flower lanterns as part of the festivities. Because these rituals were conducted throughout the night, the prepared lanterns were lit up all night long. Since then, the custom of lighting lanterns during the Lantern Festival has spread among the people. Every year during the first lunar month, households hang lanterns to celebrate the festival, illuminating both urban and rural areas.

Historically, lanterns have seamlessly integrated into various aspects of life, such as the Lantern Festival, the birth of children, weddings, and ancestral worship. The tradition of hanging flower lanterns is closely linked to daily life and is imbued with functions like warding off evil, bestowing blessings, praying for brightness, ensuring peace, and wishing for offspring. They also represent people's hopes for a better future.

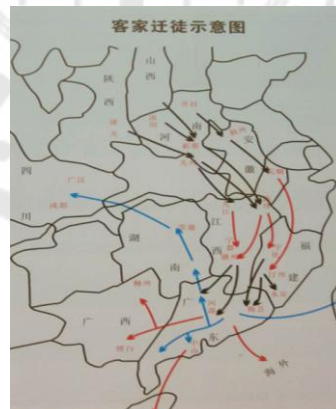


Figure 2 Diagram of Hakka Migration.

Source: Thousand mile migration, ten thousand mile long rotation, immigration history is their history, Hakka people.

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From the Western Jin Dynasty to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there were five major wars in the Central Plains, which led to five large-scale migrations of the Han people from the Central Plains to the south. Shicheng, located in the southeast of Ganzhou City, Jiangxi Province, is the only way to enter the west of Fujian Province and the east of Guangdong Province. The Han people from the Central Plains merged with the local She and Yao ethnic groups over a long period and formed a unique ethnic group—the Hakkas. Due to its special geographical location, Shicheng became the first stop in southern Jiangxi region to receive the Han people migrating southward from the Central Plains, one of the important birthplaces of the Hakka ethnic group, and one of the largest transfer stations and distribution centers for the Hakkas. Meanwhile, Shicheng also became the connection point between the Central Plains culture and the Hakka culture, as well as an important carrier of the Central Plains culture within the Hakka region.

When the Han people from the Central Plains came to Shicheng, they brought with them the customs of dragon and lion dances, which were used to pray for "favorable weather for the crops" and had implications like "warding off evil spirits and ghosts". They were commonly seen in celebrations, sacrificial ceremonies and so on. Based on inheriting the art of dragon and lion dances from the Central Plains, the Hakkas in Shicheng continuously combined the environmental characteristics of Shicheng as well as their production and living customs, and creatively developed many kinds of lanterns and lantern dances. Eventually, the uniquely featured Shicheng Lanterns took shape.

Downturn Period:

In 2000, with the progress of the times and the development of the economy, tremendous changes took place in people's lifestyles and concepts. Along with the impact of foreign cultures, Shicheng Lanterns were increasingly overlooked. The number of lantern teams shrank significantly. People's attitudes towards the lantern teams that came to perform in the city or in the countryside also changed. They used to

invite the lantern teams to perform at home, but then they became too lazy to pay any attention to them.

Revival Period:

On October 15, 2007, the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China elevated culture to a new height at the national level. The report pointed out that "Culture has increasingly become a source of national cohesion and creativity, an important factor in the competition of overall national strength, and enriching people's spiritual and cultural lives has increasingly become an eager aspiration of the Chinese people."

To better inherit and protect Shicheng Lanterns, the Shicheng County Government issued the "Implementation Opinions on the Inheritance, Protection and Development of the Shicheng Lantern Festival (Lanterns), which is on the list of national intangible cultural heritage protection", thus ensuring the protection work in terms of policies and systems.

Firstly, symposiums on the county's cultural work were held, and the Shicheng Lanterns Association was established with more than 300 members. The lantern teams in the whole county were planned and integrated, and now there are over 80 standardized lantern teams.

Secondly, lantern shows and lantern celebrations during the Spring Festival were held on a regular basis. In 2008, the first lantern show was held across the county. This show had a wide coverage, involving county-level units and townships. There were many participating units, totaling 22. Through this show, people in the whole county gained a newer and more comprehensive understanding of Shicheng Lanterns. The lantern shows will be held once every two years and will become a regular institution. Moreover, the "Shicheng Lanterns Art Festival" was held in 2010, making the art festival an important platform for the external publicity and promotion of the cultural and artistic aspects of Shicheng County.

Thirdly, conduct a comprehensive census. Shicheng Lanterns have a long historical evolution, are widely distributed and possess a profound cultural heritage. There are not only a great variety of lantern types, beautiful lantern songs, gorgeously colored lanterns and graceful lantern dances, but also various related folk legends, stories and folk customs. Therefore, it is necessary for us to conduct a census on Shicheng Lanterns, with the focus on finding out clearly the types, quantities, distribution status, living environment, inheritors of the art, current development situation and so on. Use multiple methods such as writing, audio recording, video recording and digital multimedia to make authentic, systematic and comprehensive records. On this basis, integrate resources and classify and file them.

Fourthly, conduct in-depth research. Explore and sort out the history of lanterns to trace their origins. Research on the performing arts of lanterns, including lantern songs, lanterns themselves, lantern dances, the performance forms of lanterns and the connection between lanterns and social life. Lanterns are a medium for building connections among community members, which promotes the unity of local villages and the formation of unique regional cultures.

Fifthly, cultivate talents in lanterns. Introduce Shicheng Lanterns into schools. Let the inheritors of lanterns teach students knowledge about lanterns and practice special lantern-themed break-time exercises. Compile local teaching materials on lanterns, strengthen education and publicity among teenagers, and bring lantern culture into the classroom. Schools that meet the requirements should set up lantern performance teams.

The understanding of Shicheng lantern art is limited by a lack of in-depth research and scholarly study. People tend to remember lanterns only during the Lantern Festival and other specific holidays, with most research focusing on the manufacturing techniques and styles rather than the rich folk rituals embedded in their long history. Therefore, there is an urgent and undeniable academic responsibility to research Shicheng lantern art, particularly the folk culture behind it.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To analyze factors and impacts of changing Lantern Art of Shicheng.

1.2.2 To analyze cultural identities and community relative since 2007-2024 through Lantern Art of Shicheng.

1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 In different historical periods, what changes have occurred in the artistic elements such as the shapes, patterns, and colors of Shicheng lanterns. What is the internal connection between these changes and the social and cultural backgrounds of the corresponding times.

1.3.2 In different folk festivals and celebrations, how do the cultural identity and community relations of lantern art differ. What cultural connotations and social needs do these differences reflect.

1.4 Research Expected Contribution

1.4.1 The Evolution of Shicheng Lantern Art Culture in Different Periods

The research will be conducted from multiple perspectives such as the artistic elements like the shapes, patterns, and colors of Shicheng lanterns in different periods. It will demonstrate the uniqueness of the Shicheng lantern art culture and explore the connections between the changing factors and the social and cultural backgrounds.

1.4.2 The Display of the Cultural Connotations of Shicheng Lantern Art and Community Relations

Through the analysis of different folk festivals and celebrations in Shicheng County, this study aims to explore the common spiritual connotations reflected by the entire lantern art culture in the Shicheng area, such as seeking good fortune, adding descendants, the continuation of life, and a prosperous population. The research will also reveal the connotations and social needs of the Shicheng lantern art culture.

1.4.3 Preservation and Inheritance of Traditional Culture

The study contributes to the development and promotion of Hakka lanterns as an intangible cultural heritage, enhancing public understanding of Shicheng lantern culture. It will also offer suggestions for protecting traditional culture and supporting government efforts in cultural revitalization and development.

1.5 Definition of Terms

1.5.1 History of Chinese Lantern Art

In ancient Chinese history, Central Plains culture was the most advanced. According to historical records, dragon and lion dances have a long history among the Han people in the Central Plains. The Central Plains Lantern Festival began in the early Han dynasty and flourished during the Tang dynasty.

The custom of dragon dancing in the Central Plains inherited the Shang and Zhou dynasties' tradition of "heaven worship." Dragons were regarded as auspicious creatures by ancient people and often appeared in celebrations and rituals. The dragon dance embodies the prayers for "favorable weather and national prosperity and peace."

The custom of lion dancing in the Central Plains originated during the Three Kingdoms period and became popular during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. The ancients believed it had the power to ward off evil spirits and ghosts and it frequently appeared in celebrations and rituals.

1.5.2 Shicheng Region

Shicheng County is located in the southeastern part of Jiangxi Province, in the northeastern part of Ganzhou City, on the western side of the central Wuyi Mountains. It borders Ninghua in Fujian Province to the east, Changting in Fujian Province, and Ruijin in Jiangxi Province to the south, Ningdu to the west, and Guangchang to the north. The county lies between 116°05'46" to 116°38'03" E and 25°57'47" to 26°36'13" N, covering a total area of 1,581.53 square kilometers. The Ganjiang River, which stretches over a thousand kilometers, originates from the Shilliao Ridge in the Yangdi Management Area of Hengjiang Town in Shicheng County. The Qinjiang River within the county is a secondary tributary of the Gongjiang River. The

county was named Shicheng ("Stone City") because its mountainous terrain, with many rocks and peaks, resembles a city fortress. Surrounded by mountains and blessed with beautiful scenery, Shicheng has historically been a prosperous area, rich in cultural heritage and relatively isolated from the turmoil of wars.



Figure 3 Geographic Location Map of Shicheng County.

Source: Administrative division maps of various counties and districts in Ganzhou City.

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1.5.3 Shicheng Lantern

The traditional decorations used by the people of Shicheng in festivals and ceremonies possess unique design elements, colors, and symbolic meanings. It is a folk activity with strong local characteristics formed during the migration and integration of the people of Shicheng, and is one of the typical representatives of the Hakka culture in southern Jiangxi.

The Shicheng lantern art originated from the southward migration of the Hakka people during the Southern Tang Dynasty. "Since Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty, there has been the custom of 'lighting lanterns on the Lantern Festival' in the Central Plains. During the southward migration, the Hakka people brought the lantern art custom to Shicheng. It is a kind of Hakka folk lantern art formed by people to pray for favorable weather and a bumper harvest. As the old saying goes: 'The lantern shapes are from the Central Plains while the spirits are of the Hakka. Dancing with lanterns to worship the gods and show gratitude to the ancestors. Carrying the ancestral tablets on the back to venture into the world, with lanterns accompanying the journey for thousands of years.' From this, it can be seen that as an important folk traditional custom of the Hakka people, the Shicheng lantern art inherits the Central Plains culture.

According to relevant historical materials, in the early Tang Dynasty, the productivity in Shicheng was extremely backward. People were unable to resist natural disasters and always pinned their hopes on the gods. When encountering droughts and pest infestations, the locals used the form of dragon dancing in the Central Plains to pray for rain to relieve disasters. At that time, there was no colored cloth or colored paper in Shicheng, so they used straw to make dragon-like utensils and danced in the fields to pray for rain to relieve disasters and a bumper harvest. This is what later generations called the "Pole Dragon Lantern". The "Pole Dragon Lantern" is the earliest prototype of the dragon lantern in Shicheng and also the pioneer of the Shicheng lantern art. It is still called the "Lantern King" by the people of Shicheng even today.

The Shicheng lantern art has a long history. It is not only a precious treasure in the Hakka culture but also a shining pearl in the national cultural art of our country. In 1992, Shicheng County was named "the Hometown of Lantern Art" by Jiangxi Province. In 2008, the "Shicheng Lantern Festival (Lantern Art)" was included in the national list of intangible cultural heritage.

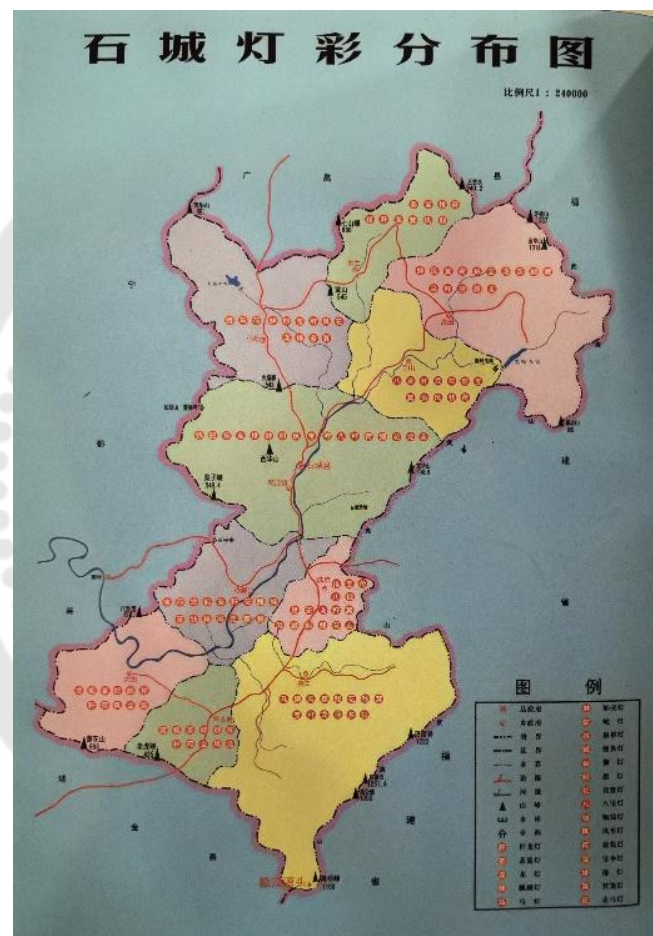


Figure 4 Distribution Map of Shicheng Hakka Lanterns.

Source: Xu Genxiong, Tu Wenhua, Wen Yongquan. (2010). Shicheng Lanterns,

p.1.

The development of Shicheng lantern art has undergone a long historical process. It is a blend of Central Plains culture and local indigenous culture, vividly reflecting the Hakka people's production and living customs. It represents the Hakka people's aspiration for divine protection from natural disasters and their yearning for a good life, celebrating happiness, prosperity, and safety. The creation, growth, and development of Shicheng lantern art have been marked by the dedication, hard work, and wisdom of countless Shicheng lantern artists.

Table 1 Administrative Regions and Types of Shicheng Hakka Lanterns Distribution





Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Qinjiang Town	Boat Lantern Qilin Lantern		
	Phoenix Lantern		

Table 1 (Continued)

Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Gaotian Town	Carp Lantern		
	Lion Lantern		
Fengshan Township	Eight Treasures Lantern		
	Clam Shell Lantern		

Table 1 (Continued)









Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Mulan Township	Banqiao Lantern		
	Tea Basket Lantern		
Xiaosong Town	Lotus Lantern		
	Carp Lantern		






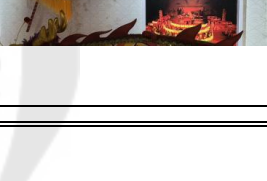

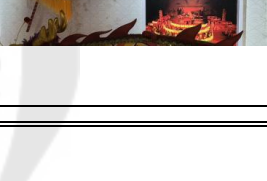
Table 1 (Continued)

Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Pingshan Town	Bench Dragon Lantern		
	Bamboo pole Lantern		
Dayou Township	Snake Lantern		
	Copper Coin Lantern Dragon Lantern		

Table 1 (Continued)

Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Longgang Township	Dragon Lantern Flower Basket Lantern		
	Lotus Lantern		
Hengjiang Town	Horse Lantern Twelve Chinese zodiac signs Lantern		
	Gao Qiao Lantern		

Table 1 (Continued)

Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	
Zhukeng Township	Tea Basket Lantern		
	Pole Dragon Lantern		
	Horse Lantern		
	Copper Coin Lantern		

1.6 Scope of the Study Conceptual

1.6.1 Conceptual Scope

This research focuses on the lantern art in Shicheng County, Ganzhou City, Jiangxi Province, China. It examines its historical development, artistic elements, and cultural significance. It will also involve research work related to the cultural changes associated with the lantern art and the identity recognition of local community residents.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The research will center on the Shicheng area, with comparisons drawn to other Hakka regions where necessary. (the eastern part of Guangdong province and the western part of Fujian province)

1.6.3 Temporal Scope

This research will cover the historical evolution of Hakka lanterns from their origin to the present, with a focus on the recent development and contemporary issues from 2007 to 2024, and it has divided the process into three specific periods.

Inheritance and Protection Period (2007-2012)

Inclusion in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List: In 2008, Shicheng Lanterns were included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List. This important recognition of its status has drawn broader attention to its protection and inheritance, laying a solid foundation for its subsequent development.

Data Sorting and Construction of Inheritance Teams: Shicheng County organized professionals to conduct salvage excavation and sorting of Shicheng Lanterns. Relevant books were published, video materials were produced, a Lanterns Development and Protection Center was established, teams of inheritors of representative projects were formed, and protection and inheritance work was carried out, cultivating professional talents for the inheritance of the lantern art.

New Model Development Period (2013-2018)

Media Dissemination and Expansion of Influence: In 2013, the CCTV Mid-Autumn Festival Gala broadcast the Shicheng Lanterns program "Gongs and Drums of Harvest" through a live space-time connection, which greatly enhanced the popularity and influence of Shicheng Lanterns and enabled more people to learn about this traditional art form.

Initial Exploration of Integration with Tourism: Shicheng County began to explore the integrated development model of "culture and tourism and intangible cultural heritage". It held various lantern art festivals and performance activities. For example, in 2016, the Lantern Art Festival of Shicheng County was held. Lantern performances were introduced into scenic areas, fixed-time and fixed-point performances were arranged on ancient stages, lantern art pavilions were set up, and cultural and creative products were developed, promoting the initial integration of Shicheng Lanterns and the tourism industry.

Integration and Sublimation Period (2019 - 2024)

Frequent Appearances on the CCTV Stage: In 2019, Shicheng Lanterns such as "Carp Lantern" and "Lotus Lantern" participated in the performance at the Jinggangshan branch venue of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. In 2022 and 2023, many

CCTV programs broadcast Shicheng Lanterns with great emphasis, further consolidating its popularity and influence across the country and making it a bright business card for the cultural and tourism industry of Shicheng County.

Deep Integration of Modern Elements: Shicheng County has been actively integrating modern popular elements into lantern performances, in aspects like sound, costumes, and dance. Meanwhile, by utilizing expressive techniques such as hand-painting, paper-cutting, engraving, as well as digital technologies like sound, light, and electricity, it has incorporated local cultural elements into creations, making Shicheng Lanterns show a "fashionable style" and better meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary audiences.

Comprehensive Integration into the Cultural and Tourism Industry: During this period, Shicheng Lanterns have gone further on the path of integrating with tourism. Not only have the performances and displays in scenic areas become richer and more diverse, but also through establishing intangible cultural heritage exhibition halls, intangible cultural heritage workshops, and incorporating intangible cultural heritage culture into tourist routes, tourists can get a close understanding of and experience intangible cultural heritage, making Shicheng Lanterns an important driving force for the development of the local cultural and tourism industry.

1.6.4 Exclusions

This research does not cover lanterns outside the Shicheng area and the Hakka culture, nor does it delve into other aspects of the Hakka culture that are not related to lanterns.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese traditional lantern culture is not only a display of handicrafts, but also a condensation of the spiritual civilization of local people. Lantern culture is closely related to regional culture and can reflect the differential characteristics of different aspects such as production and labor, local conditions and customs, and living habits. China has a vast and rich territory. Different geographical environments have created a wide variety of lantern types in different places. It endows folk customs and deeply implants the traditional culture of hometown in everyone's heart. As a traditional folk handicraft production technology, lantern art has its own special cultural charm in the long history. People also have a kind and warm feeling towards lanterns. Lantern culture not only has the value of revisiting history but also comforts national feelings. Lanterns also form colorful and diverse styles due to the influence of various aspects such as regional products, local customs, and behavior and labor.

In the expected research of this article, four keywords of "lanterns", "Gannan Hakka lanterns", "Shicheng lanterns", and "Chinese lantern folk culture" are extracted from the topic selection and the theme thought that is trying to be expressed. On the academic platform of CNKI, the "subject" retrieval method is selected for retrieval. 668 articles with "lanterns" in the title are searched. Among them, 533 are journal articles, accounting for 79.8% of the total proportion; 135 are master's and doctoral dissertations, accounting for 20.2% of the total proportion. They are from various universities respectively. They are mainly distributed in three regional scopes: East China region, Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province; Guanzhong region, Xian City, Shanxi Province; Gannan region, Ganzhou City, Jiangxi Province.

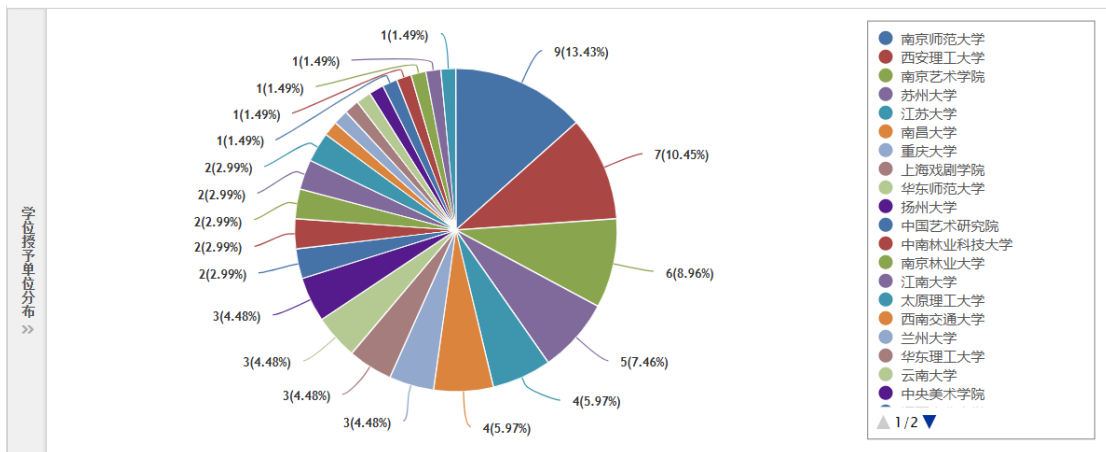


Figure 5 Universities with Published Master's and Doctoral Theses on the Theme of "Lantern Art".

Source: Generated by the Author from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI)

2.1 The origin of Gannan Hakka lanterns

Yi Zhijian. Inheritance and protection of Gannan Hakka lantern culture[J]. Jintian, 2013(12): 403, 372.

"Lanterns" originated from the "palace lanterns" in the Eastern Han Dynasty. Originally, they were a kind of lighting appliance. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, they began to become seasonal items for traditional festivals... During the Qin and Han Dynasties, there were continuous beacon fires and wars. In order to avoid the war, people migrated from the Central Plains to the south for thousands of miles and settled down to reclaim wasteland. In the long process of production and life, in order to pray for the safety and health of family members and a bumper harvest, people often hold lanterns to avoid disasters. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, the production and popularity of lanterns entered a relatively prosperous period. From handicrafts made and played by folk families at the beginning to commodities traded in the market later, and then developed towards "specialization", such as the emergence of "lantern

fairs". In the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, emperors and generals attached great importance to the Lantern Festival, which promoted the all-round development of lanterns from top to bottom.

Wang Zhiqiang. A review of the research on Gannan Hakka lantern art in recent ten years[J]. Journal of Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, 2016, 37(04): 88-91.

As a folk activity with strong local characteristics formed by Hakka people in the process of migration and integration, Gannan Hakka lanterns are one of the typical representatives of Gannan Hakka culture. Appreciating lanterns is also an important lantern folk activity for Gannan Hakka people to celebrate the Spring Festival. For example, in Shicheng, Ningdu, Yudu and other places, "Starting from the first day of the lunar new year, many villages go to pay New Year calls with lanterns until the Lantern Festival. The Lantern Festival is even more grand."

2.2 Historical origin of Shicheng County

Chen Bilin. Research on the ancient city of Shicheng[J]. Cultural Relics in Southern China, 2004,(01):84-88.

The ancient city of Shicheng is located in the middle of Shicheng County. It was formerly known as Zhuziba and also called Zhongxinba. Since the eleventh year of Baoda in the Southern Tang Dynasty (953), it has been the political, economic and cultural center of Shicheng County. Although Shicheng County is small, in ancient times it was a strategic place leading to Guangdong and Fujian. At the Zhenwu Tower at Guotou Street in the northern pass of the county seat, one can still see the engraved stone on the lintel from the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty: "Thoroughfare to Fujian and Guangdong".

Lu Xiuju. A brief study on the thoroughfare to Fujian and Guangdong[J]. Roots Seeking, 2014,(06):56-60.

"The thoroughfare to Fujian and Guangdong" is an important witness to the migration and return of the ancestors of Hakka people in southern Jiangxi. It has a certain historical status. As the thoroughfare to Fujian and Guangdong in the sense of

migration of Hakka ancestors, "most Hakka genealogies regard Shibi as the ancestral land after moving south. It is a continuation of 'looking back at Shicheng' and a spiritual symbol of a ethnic group culture." This has a certain rationality. More accurately, the recognition of Shibi as the "ancestral land of Hakka people" can be understood as the secondary definition of "Central Plains culture".

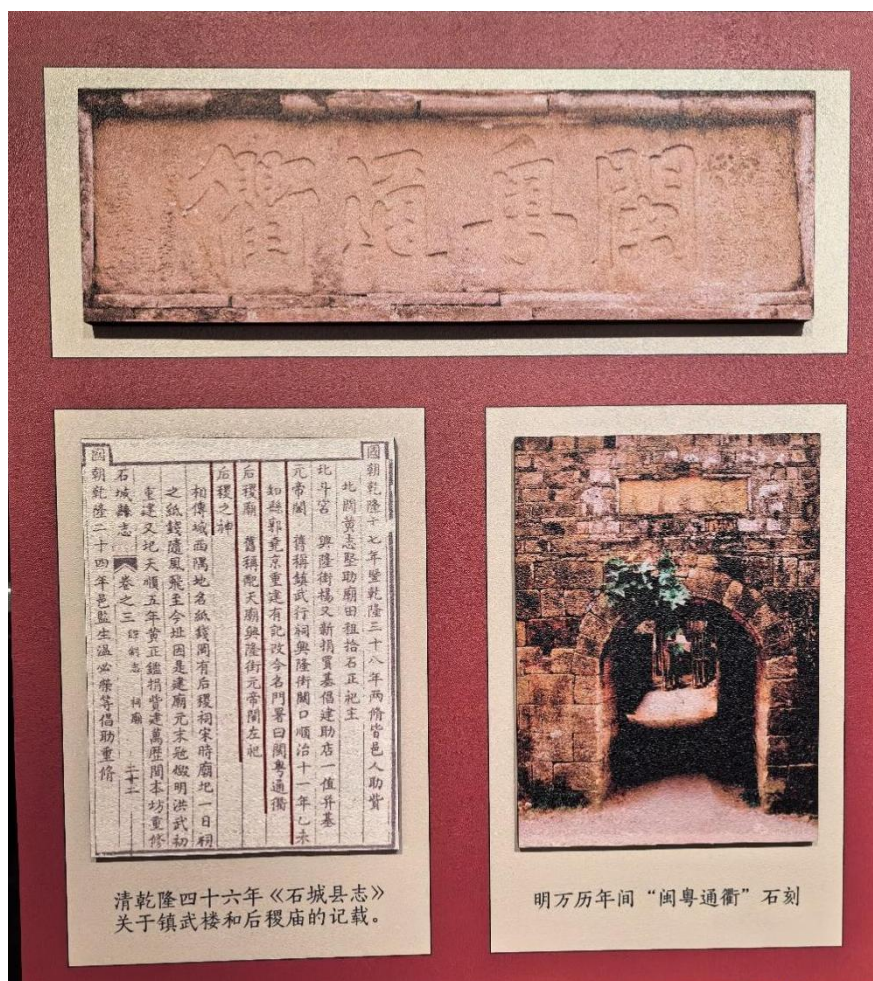


Figure 6 Stone Carving of Thoroughfare between Fujian and Guangdong.

Source: Photographed by the Author.

Chen Youliang, Zhu Qian, Chen Xiaomang. Research on the distribution characteristics of Hakka place name landscapes in Shicheng County based on spatial clustering[J]. Journal of Northwest Normal University (Natural Science Edition), 2020,56(01):98-106.

The place names in Shicheng County are spatially clustered. The density of place names in the central region is higher than that in the northern and southern regions, which is consistent with the natural landform characteristics of Shicheng County. In the clustering results, from the perspective of natural landscapes, there are more place names related to mountain features and water systems than place names related to animals, plants and farming, reflecting the natural geographical characteristics of "eight parts of mountains, half part of water and one part of field" in Shicheng County and the characteristics of Hakka "mountain culture".

2.3 Characteristics of Gannan Hakka lanterns (lanterns, dance postures, music, costumes, formations)

Lanterns:

Wang Zhiqiang. "Tradition" and "Innovation": The Modeling and Design of Gannan Hakka Traditional Lanterns[J]. Journal of Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, 2018, 39(04): 99-103.

Gannan Hakka traditional lanterns have profound cultural connotations and a long history, forming distinct artistic characteristics. However, under the dual impact of the market economy and entertainment culture, they present a situation of "lack of succession" and "difficulty in moving forward". Through an overall analysis of the current situation of traditional lantern modeling in this area, it is found that there are problems such as "conservative styles and insufficient design consciousness" and "single function and lack of market consciousness". Under Hegel's view of the self-evolution of things, "re-recognize" the artistic characteristics, classification and aesthetics of traditional lantern modeling in this area; at the same time, from the cultural and design perspectives, propose the development of Gannan Hakka traditional lantern modeling, which requires not only a change in concept but also a reasonable satisfaction of market

demands; and clarify the design idea that lantern modeling cannot be separated from the current social public culture and folk life needs.



Figure 7 Making Lantern.

Source: Photographing the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage in Shicheng County making lanterns.

Retrieved from <https://www.meipian.cn/2mfxxhi4>

Wang Zhiqiang. Colorful by Nature: The Five-element Color Phenomenon of Gannan Hakka Traditional Lanterns[J]. Journal of Yichun University, 2017, 39(11): 60-64.

Lanterns are typical Hakka folk crafts in Gannan area, characterized by a wide variety and rich colors. Taking the colors of Gannan Hakka traditional lanterns as the research object, this paper deeply analyzes the current situation of the five-element colors of lanterns in this area from the cultural and creative perspectives; proposes the extensive application phenomenon of the five-element colors in the color modeling and activity directions of traditional single lanterns and combined lanterns; expounds the unique aesthetic consciousness of the five-element colors in traditional lanterns from the psychological perspectives of color and folk customs. At the same time, it sorts out the internal logical relationship between the formation of the concept of five-element colors and the history, geography and culture of this area, providing a research basis for further interpreting the creation culture of Hakka folk crafts.

Dance:

Cao Qiuxia. A Brief Discussion on the Artistic Characteristics, Inheritance and Development of Gannan Hakka Lantern Dance[J]. Art Evaluation, 2016,(11):49-50.

As an intangible cultural heritage of Hakka people, Gannan Hakka lantern dance has a long history and is closely related to folk activities. It is not only attached to folk events but also enriches the connotations of folk customs. It not only has distinct local characteristics but also contains the status of labor productivity, spiritual outlook and their beautiful wishes for future life of Gannan people. Gannan Hakka lantern dance has unique meanings and different cultural implications in both dance movements and formations.

Fan Ting. A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Value of Gannan Hakka Lantern Song and Dance[J]. Northern Music, 2016, 36(18):81.

Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance is an important part of Gannan Hakka folk culture and can reflect the characteristics of Gannan Hakka folk culture and has profound cultural value. This paper mainly conducts relevant research on the cultural value of Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance. Based on analyzing the

characteristics of the cultural development of Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance, it analyzes in detail the cultural value of Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance.



Figure 8 Lotus Lantern Dance.

Source: Shicheng County, Ganzhou: Continuing the context of intangible cultural heritage and blooming extraordinary splendor in the times.

Retrieved from <https://jx.ifeng.com/c/8RPkawHGNN8>

Ke Lijuan. The Inheritance and Development of Gannan Hakka Lantern Song and Dance Culture[J]. Family of Dramas (first half of the month), 2014,(05):201-210.

Gannan is the largest settlement of Hakka people and plays a very important role in the formation and development of the Hakka ethnic group. Lantern song and dance is a unique folk dance of Gannan Hakka people. It is a representative of Hakka culture. It has distinct folk characteristics and locality. It is also a folk dance with simple dance style. It has attracted the attention of the world with its long history

and rich cultural connotations. Its rich artistic characteristics and cultural value are being recognized.

Music:

Chen Xing, Chen Lijuan. Some Thoughts on the Protection, Inheritance and Development of Gannan Hakka Lanterns in the Process of New Urbanization[J]. New Films and Plays, 2015,(03):139-150.

The music in Gannan Hakka lanterns is all evolved from national traditional music. It is beautiful and pleasant to listen to and is loved by the vast number of people in Gannan. The music performance forms of Hakka lanterns are mainly divided into wind and percussion music form and vocal singing form. The band of the former form is mainly composed of suona, big gong, small drum, etc., and has rich expressiveness; the latter type is mostly used in lanterns of song and dance with words, and it has the characteristic of repetition, that is, through the repeated expression of multiple musical sections for multi-level narration, making the singing have a story.

Huang Xiaoyun, Huang Wenhua. A Brief Analysis of Gannan Hakka Lantern Art[J]. Journal of Gannan Normal University, 2004,(04):119-120.

The music performance forms of Hakka lanterns are divided into two types:

- ① Wind and percussion music form: The band is mainly composed of suona, big gong, small cymbals, small gongs, big drums, small drums, etc. The main melody of the suona playing the melody is mainly playing lively and jumping music. The sound is loud and clear and has rich expressiveness. It can be played solo or in ensemble, giving people a festive feeling and is one of the main instruments of the band.
- ② Vocal singing. This type is mostly used in lanterns of song and dance with words. For example, the tunes of "Zuihuayin" and "Xiqianying" in the suite of "Cloud Lantern" are sung by human voices. The tune is similar to the high-pitched tone of He opera. The tone is high-pitched, the rhythm is long, and the melody line is clear and smooth, expressing the ideal of a beautiful life.

Costumes:

Huang He, Wu Yuhua, Xiao Suilong. An Aesthetic Study of Gannan Hakka Lantern Folk Sports Performances[J]. Liaoning Sports Science and Technology, 2016, 38 (05): 103-106.

Gannan Hakka people set off the aesthetics of body movement through beautiful costumes. The body surface of the movers is covered with clothing, shoes, hats and decorations, becoming the center of public aesthetic interest. The costumes for Gannan Hakka lantern folk sports performances pay attention to harmony and uniqueness. The costume design pursues nature, simplicity, practicality and beauty. Combined with the unique color combination of bright red and big green, it highlights the characteristics of Gannan Hakka rooted in farming civilization.



Figure 9 Costumes of Tea Basket Lantern Dance.

Source: "Shicheng Lantern Festival" was invited to participate in the 2017 Guangdong (Foshan) Intangible Cultural Heritage Week and Foshan Qiuse Folk Culture Activity.

Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/202897688_488745

Formations:

The formations of Gannan Hakka lanterns are condensed according to the living habits and aesthetic hobbies of Hakka working people. In the continuous process of performance and inheritance, from simplicity to complexity, many novel and unique patterns are constructed. With the flexible changes of rhythm, steps, rhythm and colors, it gives people emotional infection and aesthetic enjoyment. For example, "walking in four corners" means that a man should have lofty aspirations everywhere, and "one-word formation" means that people are united as one. The formations are combined with dispersion and gathering, changing endlessly, showing the unique artistic charm of Gannan Hakka lanterns.

2.4 Research on Shicheng lantern folk culture

As the lantern art in Shicheng area, which is the most representative of Gannan Hakka lanterns, it not only has gorgeous and unique shapes but also contains auspicious and beautiful meanings. The key villages with the greatest influence are: Qinjiang Town, Pingshan Town, and Gaotian Town. Therefore, I have conducted literature retrieval research on "Gannan Hakka lanterns" and "Shicheng lanterns" respectively, and focused on studying the key literature materials related to lantern culture, protection and development.

Yang Yishu. The artistic characteristics of Shicheng lanterns in Gannan and their integration with Hakka spirit[J]. Art Gallery, 2015,(05):96-97.

Shicheng lanterns in Gannan are the result of the precipitation of Chinese folk national art and folk culture for thousands of years. It is an intangible cultural heritage that integrates songs, lanterns, dances and music in a lantern-playing game. It is a folk performance form with strong local and folk characteristics and unique Hakka cultural characteristics, which directly reflects the thoughts, temperaments and qualities of Hakka people and has profound spiritual and cultural value. This paper expounds on the origin and characteristics of Shicheng lantern art in Gannan, and analyzes the integration and development of its characteristics and Hakka spirit.

Fu Li. The cultural inheritance and protection of Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance[J]. Journalism Lover, 2011,(04):144-145.

Gannan Hakka lantern song and dance not only contains the characteristics of original ecological folk dance, but also fully reflects the artistic characteristics of farming culture. It inherits rich Hakka folk customs and cultural characteristics, so effective dynamic protection measures should be implemented for it.

Li Tiantian. On the development of lantern song and dance following the footsteps of tea culture[J]. Fujian Tea, 2020, 42(10):332-333.

As a folk dance with simple dance style, lantern song and dance is a unique folk dance of Gannan tea culture. It has a long history and contains profound cultural connotations. Under the background of tea culture, exploring lantern song and dance is of positive significance for the development of tea culture in Gannan area, the dissemination of local folk customs, and even the cultural inheritance and development of the entire nation. In order to promote the inheritance and development of lantern song and dance, this paper starts from the introduction, conducts a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the relationship between tea culture and the development of lantern song and dance, and on this basis, conducts a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the development status of lantern song and dance under the background of tea culture. Finally, according to the existing problems, it explores the development strategy of lantern song and dance following the footsteps of tea culture.

Ke Lijuan. The current situation and countermeasures of the protection of Gannan lantern song and dance culture[J]. Northern Music, 2016, 36(18):80.

Gannan lantern song and dance culture has a long history and unique folk characteristics. It is a treasure of traditional folk culture in China, a symbol of the wisdom of ancient working people, and also the inheritance of traditional culture. For traditional folk art culture, it needs continuous inheritance and promotion by contemporary people to reflect the value of traditional folk culture. This paper makes a superficial analysis of the current situation of the protection of Gannan lantern song and dance culture and its

cultural protection measures, so as to provide an effective reference for inheriting and protecting China's traditional culture.

2.5 Social Identity Theory

2.5.1 Driven by self-enhancement, that is, the motivation to boost self-esteem, people will strive to pursue and maintain a positive social identity.

2.5.2 A positive social identity is generated based on the biased comparison between the group to which an individual belongs and out-groups. During festival celebrations, the unique celebration ways and cultural heritages of one's own group will create differences from other groups, thus giving rise to a more positive identity towards their own group.

2.5.3 If people are dissatisfied with their social identity, they will try to leave the group they belong to and join a more favorable one, or they will try to make their own group satisfactory through social creation and social competition. When people's cognition and emotions towards cultural heritages such as festival celebrations and ritual worships of their own group change, it may influence their sense of identity towards the group and then trigger corresponding behavioral adjustments.

In the festival celebration activities in Shicheng County, people strengthen their identity as members of a certain village or town in Shicheng County by participating in specific traditional festivals, such as the lantern custom activities during the Spring Festival, thus gaining self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Different kinds of lantern festival activities held in various towns and townships of Shicheng County are unique festival celebration activities for local community residents. Through fixed participants, fixed ritual actions and comparisons with other ethnic or cultural groups, the cultural characteristics and identity of their own group can be highlighted more, and social identity can be enhanced.

2.6 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interactionists believe that society is composed of the interactions of individuals or groups through meaningful symbols, and such symbols are culture. Different symbols form a symbolic system, which maintains social order and enables people to conduct normal communication activities. In Shicheng, the author believes that the lantern art is a cultural symbol, symbolizing wealth, prosperity, good fortune, and prosperity. Lanterns are not only objects but also an expression and reinforcement of family concepts such as reunion and harmony and national emotions. Through this symbolic interaction, social identity and group cohesion among people are enhanced.

During the process of the lantern festival ceremony, the behaviors and interactions of the participants are also based on the common understanding of the meanings of the symbols. For example, in the lantern festival activities, actions such as waving lanterns, running around the field, as well as the lines of the lantern leader and the rhythm of the music all follow certain traditional norms and symbolic meanings. These symbolic behavioral interactions enable the participants to confirm and reinforce their family identities, blood relationships, and their identifications with ancestors and traditional culture in the common cultural context.

2.7 Functionalism Theory

Malinowski's "A Scientific Theory of Culture" analyzes, from its unique perspective, how culture serves as a scientific research object and how it influences and shapes social behaviors. This book has a profound impact on understanding the functionality and adaptability of culture.

From the perspective of social integration, festival celebrations and ritual worships have the functions of uniting social members and strengthening social cohesion. During festivals, people, regardless of differences in regions, ages, occupations and so on, jointly participate in celebration activities and share the joy and cultural connotations of the festivals. Such shared experiences can promote the harmony of interpersonal relationships, strengthen the connections and sense of belonging among social members, and then maintain social stability and unity.

For example, the Shicheng Lantern Festival activities during the Lantern Festival make the relationships among family members, neighbors and friends closer, and create a harmonious and friendly atmosphere in the whole society. Festival celebrations and ritual worships also have the functions of cultural inheritance and education. Through the festival customs and rituals passed down from generation to generation, the history, culture, values and other aspects of the ethnic group are transmitted to the next generation, enabling them to understand and identify with their own cultural roots and cultivating a sense of national pride and cultural confidence.

2.8 Summary

To sum up, at present, the research on lantern art in China is mostly carried out on the lantern art of several relatively representative regions. Although there are 668 articles on CNKI, most of them analyze the shape, production and cultural connotations of lanterns. There is less analysis on the folk functions and etiquette of lanterns, or only a few words mention the implications of "auspiciousness and fortune gathering" and "adding a child". However, the deep cultural genes, implication sources and legendary stories contained behind these have not been well analyzed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the research methods used for studying Hakka lanterns in the Shicheng area. The study analyzes lanterns from the Gannan Shicheng region, examining the folk cultural functions embedded in the lantern art.

3.1 Research Design

This research primarily adopts a qualitative approach, beginning with a literature review and field investigation in Shicheng County. The author examined historical documents from the Gannan region, local county chronicles, historical maps, and other relevant historical and geographical materials to thoroughly explore the research topic. Finally, through field visits, consultations with local residents, and interviews with intangible cultural heritage practitioners, the study conducts a comprehensive analysis of the research subjects.

3.2 Historical Research Method

The historical research method involves studying past events in chronological order using historical data. Also known as longitudinal research, this approach entails collecting relevant historical documents, research papers, and monographs to understand the history, development, and related theories of Gannan Hakka lantern art. The method begins by outlining the development of Gannan Hakka ancestors at various historical stages, examining changes in production and lifestyle brought about by ethnic proliferation, cultural exchanges, and political systems. It explores the causes of Shicheng lantern art and its relationship with social and cultural contexts.

3.3 Comparative Research Method

In exploring Gannan Hakka lantern art, the comparative research method will be used to closely examine the lantern art of the "Shicheng region." This involves a detailed investigation into the historical origins of Shicheng lantern art, tracing its

formation and flourishing timeline, and distinguishing how Shicheng lantern art, while rooted in Gannan Hakka culture, differs from lantern art in other Gannan Hakka regions.

The lantern culture of Shicheng will be compared with that of other Gannan Hakka regions to reveal similarities and differences. This research will analyze the historical development and cultural evolution of Shicheng lantern art, exploring its similarities and distinctions from the broader Gannan Hakka culture. Additionally, it will examine the unique connections and differences in terms of folkloric cultural functions and symbolic meanings.

Other counties in southern Jiangxi also have lantern festivals, but the forms of the lantern festivals and the styles of the lanterns are different from those of Shicheng Lanterns. Shicheng Lanterns enjoy a high level of public participation. For example, the Snake Lantern in Dayou Township and the Banqiao Lantern in Mulan Township are both participated in by male villagers from the same village, and the total number of participants can reach about 100 people. Shicheng Lanterns have their own unique charm, which is mainly reflected in the following five aspects:

Firstly, lanterns. Bamboo strips are used as the main raw materials for making them. Most of the pattern designs adopt a realistic approach, with rich and diverse themes and bright and gorgeous color combinations.

Secondly, dance postures. The dances among different lantern types and different roles each have their own characteristics. Women's movements mainly include turning, stepping back and forth, squatting, and jumping, showing the lightness, grace, elegance and delicacy of the dance postures. Men's movements mainly include swinging, crouching low, bowing, and jumping, demonstrating the ease, liveliness, boldness and steadiness of the dance postures.

Thirdly, music. Shicheng Lanterns have their original gong and drum scores as well as lantern songs and lantern tunes. The unique percussion music in Shicheng has a lively rhythm and varies in an orderly manner. It is used to accompany dragon lanterns and lion lanterns. When combined with the majestic lanterns and the bold and unrestrained dance postures, it gives people an enjoyment of masculine beauty. For tea

basket lanterns and boat lanterns, some beautiful folk songs and ditties have been absorbed to form unique lantern songs and lantern tunes with beautiful melodies and lively rhythms.

Fourthly, costumes. The costumes for Shicheng Lanterns pay attention to coordination, harmony and uniqueness. Different lantern performances are paired with different costumes, and different roles wear different costumes. The costume design pursues nature, simplicity, practicality and beauty, highlighting the Hakka characteristics. The coordinated various costumes have become a beautiful scene in the lantern performances.

Fifthly, formations. Shicheng Lanterns originate from life. Lantern artists have created many novel and beautiful formations, accompanied by changes in melodies, footwork, rhythms and colors, giving people an enjoyment of beauty. Many formations have profound cultural connotations. For example, "Walking in All Directions" means that Hakka men have ambitions all over the world; "Rolling the Grain Basket" means celebrating a bumper harvest; "Half-Moon Shape" means perfect conjugal bliss; "Single-File Formation" means that unity is strength.

3.4 Field Survey Research Method

Through field visits, this research delves into Shicheng County, Ganzhou City, to directly observe the current state of Shicheng lantern art at the county museum and lantern art galleries. Engaging in face-to-face interactions with local residents provides an in-depth understanding of the region's lantern culture, offering the most direct and intuitive experience.

It is planned to go to ten townships in Shicheng County, namely Qinjiang Town, Gaotian Town, Fengshan Township, Mulan Township, Xiaosong Town, Pingshan Town, Dayou Township, Longgang Township, Hengjiang Town and Zhukeng Township, to conduct investigations. And the festive lanterns will be classified by village. Then the townships and festive lanterns that are the most representative of community culture will be selected for more in-depth data analysis.

① Data Collection Methods

Field Observation and Video Recording: conducting direct observations on museum exhibition halls (such as the exhibition of Dragon Lantern models) and activity venues of the Lantern Art Cultural Center, using photographic equipment to record exhibition methods, physical status, and space utilization.

In-depth Interviews: conducting semi-structured interviews with curators and staff to learn about their work content, understanding of lantern art, collection sources, exhibition design ideas, educational activity planning, and the difficulties they are facing.

Participatory Observation: possibly attending or participating in relevant lectures, workshops, and preparation meetings organized by the institutions to understand their dynamic work processes.

② Analysis Methods

Textual Analysis: coding and thematic analysis of interview transcripts and collected documents, extracting core categories such as "institutional role", "functional cognition", "cooperation mode", and "challenges".

Comparative Analysis: comparing the similarities and differences in objectives, methods, and effects between museums and cultural centers; contrasting the differences between institutional narratives and the narratives of communities and craftsmen.

Spatial and Visual Analysis: analyzing how exhibitions in museums and cultural centers construct audiences' cognition of lantern art, and evaluating the completeness and effectiveness of their information transmission.

This method involves interacting closely with individuals closely related to the research subject to obtain the most direct and authentic data. A substantial amount of primary data is collected, providing a clear understanding of Shicheng lantern art both broadly and in detail. Additionally, photographic equipment is used to visually document various aspects and the current state of Shicheng lantern art. Surveys and

photographic documentation are conducted to collect data, create maps, and provide detailed records of the research subjects.

3.5 Interview Research Method

The research will involve in-depth interviews and exchanges with people related to Shicheng lantern art, including the inheritors of intangible heritage who specialize in studying Shicheng lantern art, the lantern art researchers in the Shicheng County Cultural Center, the staff members of the Shicheng County Museum, and the local residents. These interviews will provide in-depth and multi-dimensional insights into the history and culture of Shicheng lantern art.

① Interviewee Groups

Selection Criteria: covering officially recognized inheritors at different levels (provincial, municipal, and county levels) to ensure the authority and representativeness of craftsmanship; balancing different genders and ages to understand the intergenerational differences in perspectives.

② Shicheng County Museum

Selection Criteria: this museum is the only one in Shicheng County and also an official museum supported by the government. Interviewees include the curator and ordinary staff. The curator can provide institutional positioning, policy interpretation, and overall planning; the staff are responsible for specific exhibition arrangement, collection, and educational activities, with a good understanding of practical details and public feedback.

③ Lantern Art Cultural Center

Selection Criteria: this center is the institution with the largest collection of lantern models in Shicheng County, boasting a complete set of models and related introductions. Interviewees include the curator, deputy curator, and professional staff. They are the direct organizers of mass cultural activities, as well as the operators of intangible cultural heritage application and management. From the perspectives of

public cultural services, activity organization, and policy implementation, we can understand the position and operation mechanism of lantern art in local culture.

The following table includes three groups of interviewees, with 5 people in each group, totaling 15 people. The first group is from the "Shicheng Lantern Festival", consisting of 2 provincial-level, 2 municipal-level and 1 county-level inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. The second group is from the "Shicheng County Museum", including 1 curator and 4 ordinary staff members. The third group is from the "Shicheng County Cultural Center", comprising 1 curator, 1 deputy curator and 3 ordinary staff members.

Table 2 Interviewees Information Sheet (Shicheng Lantern Festival, Shicheng County Museum, Shicheng County Cultural Center)

Interviewees Information Sheet (Shicheng Lantern Festival, Shicheng County Museum, Shicheng County Cultural Center)					
Serial number	Department	Name	Gender	Contact Information	Position
1	Shicheng Lantern Festival	HUANG YUNXING	Male	18679765585	Provincial intangible cultural heritage inheritors
2	Shicheng Lantern Festival	LI JIANMEI	Female	13979716905	Provincial intangible cultural heritage inheritors
3	Shicheng Lantern Festival	HUANG JIAMAO	Male	15070740685	City level intangible cultural heritage inheritors
4	Shicheng Lantern Festival	ZHANG NINGBAO	Male	17770885540	City level intangible cultural heritage inheritors

Table 2 (Continued)

Interviewees Information Sheet (Shicheng Lantern Festival, Shicheng County Museum, Shicheng County Cultural Center)					
5	Shicheng Lantern Festival	MEI XUETING	Female	13879717089	County level inheritors of intangible cultural heritage
6	Shicheng County Museum	LAI WENMING	Male	18172763288	Director
7	Shicheng County Museum	CHEN JIE	Female	13330138557	working personnel
8	Shicheng County Museum	WANG XIAOTENG	Male	19979737678	working personnel
9	Shicheng County Museum	LIU SHAN XIANG	Female	18172770653	working personnel
10	Shicheng County Museum	WEN HONGXIA	Female	18172750527	working personnel
11	Shicheng County Cultural Center	XIONG JUNFEI	Male	19979737663	Director
12	Shicheng County Cultural Center	YU XIAOMIN	Male	19979737635	Deputy Director
13	Shicheng County Cultural Center	CHEN MINGHUA	Female	13367979101	working personnel
14	Shicheng County Cultural Center	HUANG LI	Female	13767735939	working personnel
15	Shicheng County Cultural Center	XU JINGWEN	Female	15270718612	working personnel

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Shicheng Lantern Art boasts a rich variety of forms. Different types of lanterns not only feature distinct characteristics in shape and craftsmanship but also carry diverse symbolic meanings and community functions. To systematically present their type system and cultural connotations, this study has compiled the "Table of Shicheng County Lantern Types and Their Characteristics" (in Table 3) based on field surveys and literature collation. This table sorts out major lantern types, including Snake Lanterns, Banqiao Lanterns, and Tea basket Lanterns, briefly illustrates their structural features, application occasions, and symbolic implications, and lays a foundation for the subsequent analysis of their existing status, driving factors of changes, and social cultural significance.

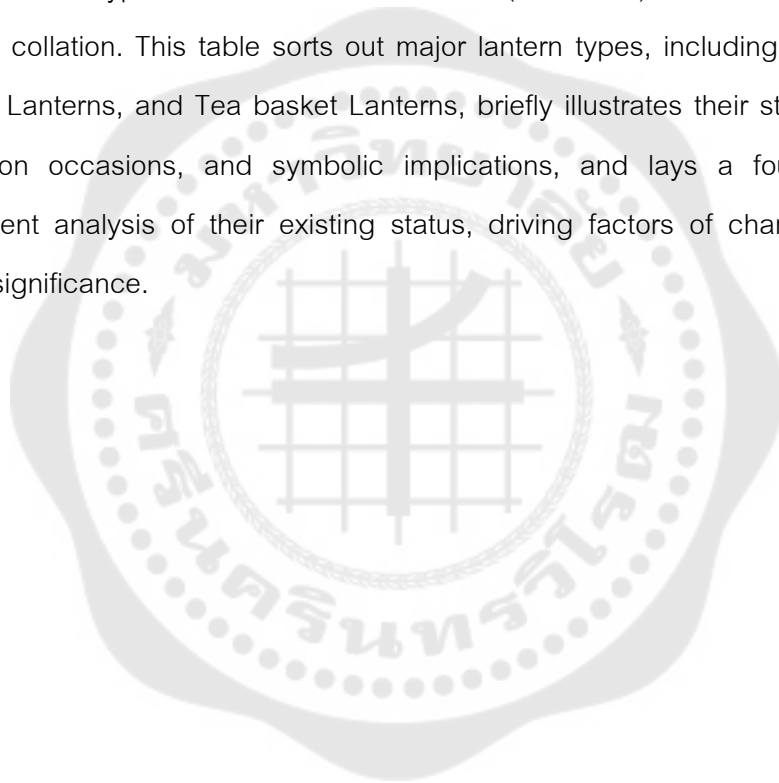


Table 3 Table of Shicheng County Lantern Types and Their Characteristics

Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
1. Wish-Fulfillment Category	Blessings through Homophony: Leveraging the homophony of "dēng" (lantern) and "dīng" (descendant) in the Shicheng dialect, the core implication is "prosperous population and flourishing fortune alongside a growing family".	Pole Dragon Lantern		Generally follows the traditional craftsmanship of Shicheng lantern art, with bamboo strips as the frame and colored paper as the covering.	Divided into two categories: "Graphic Patterns" and "Character Patterns":
Description: This category of lanterns carries the Hakka people's core aspirations for "prosperous population, favorable weather for crops, and warding off evil spirits and disasters". Mostly	Prayers for Natural Favor: Embodying wishes for "favorable weather for crops and abundant harvests" (represented by Dragon Lanterns and Pole Dragon Lanterns), as well as "warding off evil spirits and disasters" (represented by Lion Lanterns, Snake Lanterns, and Banqiao Lanterns).	Dragon Lantern		Frame: Perennial moso bamboo strips are mainly used (featuring high flexibility for easy shaping). For large-sized lanterns (e.g., Banqiao Lanterns, Dragon Lanterns), iron wires and wooden boards are added for reinforcement.	Graphic Patterns: Primarily featuring "auspicious images", such as auspicious cloud patterns (for warding off evil), water wave patterns (for praying for rain), flower and bird patterns (symbolizing vitality), and mythical beast patterns (kylin, phoenix, dragon).
		Banqiao Lantern			

Table 3 (Continued)

Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
<p>performed during major folk custom festivals such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, they are deeply bound to traditional rituals and clan activities.</p>	<p>Auspicious Symbols: The Kylin Lantern symbolizes "bestowing children and bringing blessings", the Phoenix Lantern stands for "prosperity and auspiciousness", the Eight Immortals Lantern signifies "peace and good health", and the Copper Coin Lantern represents "attracting wealth and treasures".</p>	<p>Snake Lantern</p>		<p>Surface Layer: Warm-colored paper in bright red, bright yellow, emerald green, etc., symbolizes joy and prosperity. Semi-transparent oil paper is used to enhance light penetration.</p>	<p>Character Patterns: Directly printed with auspicious phrases, e.g., "Guotai Min'an" (The country is prosperous and the people live in peace), "Dingcai Liangwang" (Prosperous population and flourishing fortune), "Fugui Shuangquan" (Both wealth and honor) (used on Dragon Lanterns); "Chunfeng Deyi" (Success and good fortune), "Jixing Gaozhao" (Good luck shines brightly), "Jia You Haoshi" (Good things happen at home) (used on Snake Lanterns and Banqiao Lanterns).</p>
		<p>Qilin Lantern</p>			
		<p>Phoenix Lantern</p>			

Table 3 (Continued)


Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
<p>2. Life and Labor Category</p> <p>Description: This category is a direct manifestation of Shicheng lantern art's "origin from life". Taking the Hakka people's "production scenarios and daily tools" as prototypes, it transforms daily labor activities such as tea-</p>	<p>Recording Production: The Chalan Lantern (Tea-basket Lantern) recreates the Hakka people's tea-picking scenes and celebrates harvests. The Boat Lantern reproduces the shipping life in the Ganjiang River Basin, acting as a commemoration and inheritance of traditional water-based livelihoods.</p> <p>Blessings for Labor: Lantern performances depict scenes praying for "bumper tea harvests" and "safe voyages", reflecting the Hakka people's awe and expectations toward the "livelihood dependent on natural conditions" (a way of life where outcomes rely on environmental factors like weather).</p>	<p>Tea Basket Lantern</p>		<p>Tea basket Lantern: The frame is made of thin bamboo strips tied into a "tea-basket shape". The outer layer is pasted with light green and pink colored paper to simulate tea leaves and tea flowers, and tassels are attached along the basket edge to add a sense of dynamism.</p>	<p>Tea basket Lantern: The basket body is printed with tea tree patterns and tea flower images. Paper-cut portraits of tea-picking girls are pasted on both sides, and some parts of the lantern are inscribed with characters such as "bumper tea harvest" and "fragrance covering the hills".</p>
		<p>Clam Shell Lantern</p>		<p>Clam Shell Lantern: Two curved bamboo strips form the frame, which is pasted with white paper and painted with colors. The opening and closing of a clam shell</p>	<p>Clam Shell Lantern: Decorative pearl patterns and wave patterns are pasted on the inner side to enhance its ornamental value.</p>

Table 3 (Continued)


Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
<p>picking and shipping into artistic forms. Integrating both "documentary realism" and "aesthetic value", it serves as a visual expression of the Hakka people's life wisdom.</p>	<p>Warmth of Daily Life: The design of lantern types is closely connected to daily life. For example, the "tea-basket" prototype of the Chalan Lantern is a common tool for tea-pickers, and the "boat shape" of the Boat Lantern replicates local fishing boats, conveying the "warmth of everyday life" (the vitality and warmth of ordinary daily routines).</p>	<p>Boat Lantern</p>		<p>are simulated through up-and-down movements.</p> <p>Boat Lantern: The main body uses wooden boards to make the hull base, and bamboo strips are tied into a boat awning, which is pasted with white and blue paper to simulate sails and river water. The bottom is hollowed out to allow performers to carry and move it easily.</p>	<p>Boat Lantern: The boat awning is painted with wave patterns and fish patterns, which symbolize smooth sailing. Fragments of lyrics from "boatmen's work songs" are pasted on the hull to enhance the sense of daily life.</p>

Table 3 (Continued)

Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
3. Folk Entertainment Category	Enhancing Festival Atmosphere: Its core function is to add liveliness and gather crowds. For example, Horse Lanterns are used for village tours to extend New Year greetings, conveying an atmosphere of "harmonious neighborhoods and festive joy".	Bench Dragon Lantern		Portability as the Priority: Thin bamboo strips and thin colored paper are mostly used, with no need for complex	Cartoonized Images: Carp Lanterns are painted with fish scale patterns,
		Carp Lantern			

Table 3 (Continued)


Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
lanterns is mostly performed on streets and lanes during the Lantern Festival and Dragon Boat Festival. Emphasizing universal participation, it serves as an important carrier for the Hakka community to strengthen emotional bonds and enhance festive atmosphere. Some lantern types integrate	Expression of Childlike Fun: Bench Dragon Lanterns and Twelve Zodiac Lanterns are designed with the original intention of "being easy for children to participate in", fostering teenagers' interest in lantern art.	Lotus Lantern		reinforcement. For example, Lotus Lanterns use bamboo strips to form frames that simulate the shape of lotus flowers, and cyan and white paper is pasted to mimic the appearance of lotus blooms.	highlighting the vivid expression of fish eyes, and feature bright colors with a red background and gold patterns; Twelve Zodiac Lanterns are painted with simplified designs based on the shapes of "the Rat, Ox, Tiger, etc.", emphasizing the distinctive characteristics of each animal.
		Bamboo pole Lantern			
	Interactive Connection: Performances require interaction with the audience. Carp Lanterns	Horse Lantern		Prop Adaptation: Horse Lanterns use linen to	Festive Atmosphere: The overall patterns are presented in red and golden

Table 3 (Continued)

Table of Lantern Types and Characteristics in Shicheng County					
Lantern Type	Connotative Culture	Lantern Name	Picture	Decoration Materials	Decoration Patterns
childlike fun and competitiveness.	and Lotus Lanterns attract passers-by to watch, enhancing the sense of participation among community residents.	Twelve Chinese zodiac signs Lantern		make horse heads, enhancing the textural quality.	yellow, catering to the Hakka people's demand for a festive vibe.



4.1 The factors and impacts of changing Lantern Art of ShiCheng.

Over the past two decades, the lantern art of Shicheng has, on the one hand, maintained the core structure of local rituals, still following the basic sequence: originating from ancestral halls, gathering at temple fairs, parading along main streets, circling in squares, and leaving lanterns at homes. On the other hand, it has undergone significant adjustments in terms of material usage, production organization, public presentation, and social communication.

The integration of industry and festivals, the involvement of schools and museums, the standardization of public administration, and the "attention peaks" formed by mobile media—these factors have collectively driven the transformation of lantern art from a single festive craft into a multi-functional complex encompassing "craftsmanship, education, tourism, and public culture."

Therefore, the contradiction of "changing forms while preserving the core" has become the key to understanding the current state of Shicheng's lantern art. Who is driving these changes? What are the reasons? How do these changes, in turn, affect the ecology of traditional craftsmanship, the local economy, and community relations? This section elaborates on these questions.

4.1.1 Analysis of the Causes and Mechanisms of Changes

4.1.1.1 Craftsman Structure and Craft Inheritance

A total of 14 valid questionnaires from the craftsman group were collected in this survey. Combined with on-site interviews, it can be seen that the structure and skill inheritance of Shicheng lantern craftsmen present a multi-dimensional current situation, with specific details as follows:

①. The craftsman group as a whole shows the characteristic of "high willingness to pass on skills, low practical incentives": Craftsmen are generally willing to pass on the lantern-making skills to the younger generation. However, affected by practical factors such as low economic benefits and insufficient daily training resources, there are obvious obstacles to the actual advancement of skill inheritance.

Huang Jiamao (personal communication, February 10, 2025) pointed out that the craftsman group generally lacks stable income. "If the resource allocation at the government level fails to cover the costs of daily training and materials, even the strongest enthusiasm will be difficult to sustain." Therefore, the policy orientation should shift from "festival investment" to "daily support", enabling workshops to truly achieve sustainable development.

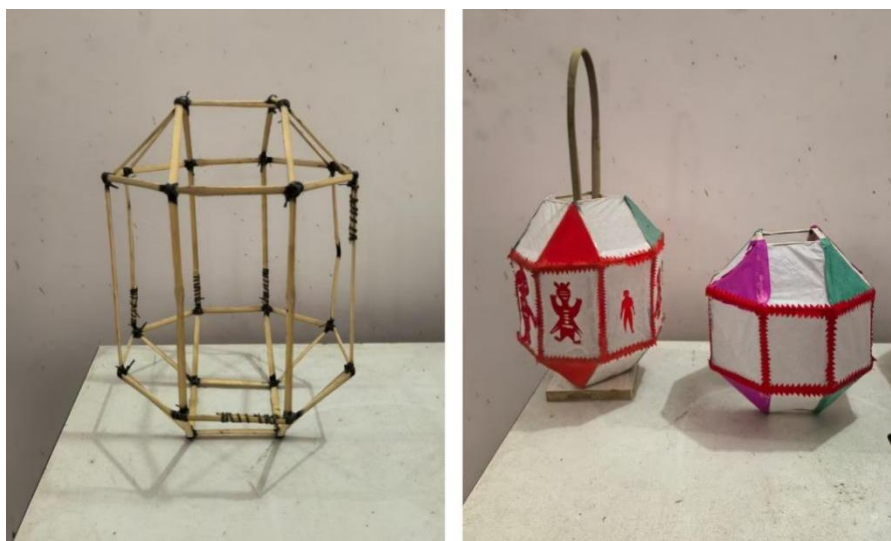


Figure 10 Bamboo Splint Frame and Finished Product After Pasting Paper of Snake Lantern in Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. There are intergenerational differences in the craftsman structure, and the master-apprentice chain has not yet been fully restored: Among the current craftsman group, emerging entrants coexist with veteran artisans who have persisted for a long time. However, a stable master-apprentice inheritance system has not been reestablished. In terms of skill cognition, veteran artisans pay more attention to traditional craftsmanship details such as the toughness of the framework, the proportion

of joint turns, and the streamline of the "snake body"; while new entrants focus more on the appearance effect and lighting devices.

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 10, 2025) believes that the biggest challenge at present is that young people mostly participate briefly before festivals, lacking patience for the craftsmanship procedures and training in details. It is essential to restore the daily skill-practicing mechanism; otherwise, the concentrated teaching before festivals alone cannot form a stable skill inheritance chain.

③. The teaching scenarios are concentrated around festivals, with a serious lack of daily training: Clan and family workshops remain the core scenarios for skill inheritance, yet their willingness to teach has not been effectively transformed into opportunities for learning. Young people mostly participate in basic work such as lantern body assembly and coloring for a short time before festivals, and disperse after the festivals. The scarcity of daily skill training scenarios makes it difficult for their initial interest in learning to develop into proficient craftsmanship skills.

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 10, 2025) pointed out that lantern-making skills are not an isolated form of craftsmanship, but a cultural practice embedded in clans and communities. If the production process cannot be integrated into the daily life of the community, it will be hard for the craftsmen's willingness to teach to be converted into motivation for young people to stay and learn.



Figure 11 An Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor Making a Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author

④. The profit model is highly dependent on festival periods, with conservative daily operations: The production and performance of lanterns are highly concentrated during festive periods such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, showing the characteristics of "intensive input during peaks and rapid conclusion". There is a lack of stable orders to support operations on regular days, which leads workshops to take a conservative approach in aspects such as venue rental, material stockpiling, and working hour arrangements. As a result, it is difficult to form a sustainable operation model.

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 10, 2025) suggested that judging from the school curriculum in Shicheng County, the inheritance of craftsmanship needs to be more closely integrated with the education system. The craftsmanship procedures should be broken down into "teachable units", and long-term

cooperation between schools and local museums should be carried out to lower the entry threshold and enhance the sustainability of learning.



Figure 12 Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor Showing Festival Orders

Source: Photographed by the Author

From 2007 to 2024, Shicheng lanterns have transformed from traditional ritual handicrafts into multi-functional and composite cultural carriers. The specific changes are reflected in the following aspects:

① Form

From being used only one festival rituals to the integration of multiple functions: evolving from being exclusively used in ancestral hall and temple fair rituals during traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, to being applied in various modern scenarios including scenic spot performances, school courses, museum exhibitions, and cultural tourism promotions.

② Shape

Continuation and differentiation of traditional types: core types such as Snake Lantern, Banqiao Lantern, and Dragon Lantern still maintain living inheritance, with their production becoming more standardized.

Marginalization of some types: due to high performance complexity and a shortage of inheritors, types like Boat Lantern, Kirin Lantern, Phoenix Lantern, Eight Immortals Lantern, Clam Lantern, and Twelve Chinese Zodiac Lanterns have gradually faded out of public performances, mostly preserved in museums or oral memories.

Emergence of innovative and simplified modeling: to facilitate school teaching and stage performance participation, more portable and easy-to-operate models have been developed, such as Lotus Lantern and Carp Lantern.

③ Patterns

Patterns: still dominated by traditional auspicious motifs (such as cloud patterns, wave patterns, flowers and birds, and auspicious phrases). However, influenced by modern aesthetics and tourism commercialization, some newly created patterns tend to be more bright-colored, generalized, and even show a cartoonish tendency (e.g., Carp Lantern and Twelve Chinese Zodiac Lanterns).



Figure 13 Decorative patterns crafted with traditional paper-cutting techniques

Source: Photographed by the Author

Colors: traditionally, great emphasis was placed on the festive symbolic meanings of red, yellow, and green. In modern production, pigments are more widely used with higher color saturation to enhance visual appeal. The introduction of LED light strips has also changed the traditional light and color effects.

④ Composition

Materials: bamboo strips are still the main material for the framework, but large-scale lanterns (such as Banqiao Lantern and Dragon Lantern) will be reinforced with iron wire and wooden boards. In addition to traditional colored paper and oiled paper, modern materials with better durability or different light transmittance are also tried as covering materials.

Craftsmanship: core craftsmanship (bamboo strip selection, framework making, and node binding) is facing inheritance pressure. Some new practitioners pay more attention to appearance effects and lighting devices, without having a deep grasp of traditional basic processes.

In summary, the core bottlenecks in the structure of Shicheng lantern craftsmen and the inheritance of their craftsmanship are concentrated on the supply side: first, the lack of a daily training mechanism, which fails to upgrade the "short-term pre-festival assembly" to "year-round continuous training"; second, the insufficient guarantee of resources and income, making it difficult to transform craftsmen's "willingness to teach" into practical results of "being able to teach well, retain learners, and produce quality works". Going forward, breakthroughs need to be made in aspects such as the establishment of training mechanisms, the regular allocation of resources, and the integration of inheritance scenarios into daily life, so as to stabilize the craftsmanship inheritance chain.

4.1.1.2 Community Villagers' Participation and Attention from External Tourists

Based on field observations, interviews, and questionnaire feedback, the participation of local community villagers and the attention of external tourists in Shicheng lantern art exhibit a distinct characteristic: "a huge crowd surges during festivals, yet participation drops sharply after festivals." The specific current situation is as follows:

- ① Villagers have a strong emotional identification with lanterns, regarding them as a core local symbol: The Snake Lantern of Zhuolong Village in Dayou Township is a long snake formation composed of hundreds of thick wooden planks, each equipped with a "Jilong Lamp" (a traditional lantern shaped like a dustpan). When the lanterns are lit at night, lantern-bearers walk through the village, creating a winding, undulating, colorful, and wriggling totem. Shaped like a long snake, it is commonly known as the "Snake Lantern."

At the community level, the Snake Lantern of Zhuolong Village in Dayou Township is widely regarded as a core carrier of the community's emotional community and local image. During festivals, villagers proactively participate in such links as the lantern team assembly, street processions, and square performances, forming a complete participation chain of "ancestral hall assembly — street echoes — square performances." Moreover, intergenerational interaction within families is evident: the elderly are familiar with festival rituals and craftsmanship details, middle-aged villagers take charge of safety assurance and organizational coordination, and teenagers and children gain access to learning through watching, following, and participating in activities (see Figure 13).



Figure 14 The Snake Lantern of Dayou Township Performing "Da Tuanwei" (Lantern Team Circling Around) in the Square

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. Villagers' participation is restricted by multiple factors, with insufficient motivation for daily engagement: Despite villagers' high enthusiasm for festival participation, they are often constrained by time, physical strength, and

organizational conditions in reality. Work and academic schedules make it difficult to realize their willingness to "continue participating after festivals." Additionally, the lack of fixed, regular activity venues and systematic courses prevents "temporary excitement" from evolving into "daily persistence." The connections formed within the community through lantern art can only be maintained during festival periods and struggle to sustain in daily life.

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 10, 2025) pointed out: "The daily participation of local villagers and non-local tourists is restricted by time and work commitments. Without regular venues and activities, community connections will only be briefly fostered during festivals."



Figure 15 Villagers Returning to Their Hometown Arranging Fireworks to Be Set Off in the Evening at the Entrance of the Ancestral Hall

Source: Photographed by the Author

③. Non-local tourists show high attention during festivals, forming a "peak of attention": During festival periods, a large number of non-local tourists gather due to the visual appeal of lantern performances (see Figure 15). Communication forms such as short videos and photo-text records further amplify this popularity, creating a "peak of attention" and exerting a positive effect on the promotion of Shicheng lanterns' local image. However, this attention is "short-lived." After the peak fades, if there are no accessible and revisitable regular experience sites, tourists' attention will decline rapidly.

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 10, 2025) stated: "Tourists are mainly attracted by the performances and forms, but rarely understand the delicate craftsmanship behind the lanterns. This superficial viewing cannot be transformed into long-term attention."



Figure 16 Tourists Gradually Gathering in the Village and Increasing Vehicle Traffic

Source: Photographed by the Author

④. Tourists' experience is overly "visual-oriented," with insufficient in-depth understanding of craftsmanship: Tourists and study groups mostly stay at core locations such as squares and main streets. They are easily attracted by visual spectacles like lantern team processions and the "Datuanwei" (a traditional lantern performance ritual), yet fail to gain a deep understanding of the craftsmanship behind lantern-making—such as proportion control, joint craftsmanship, and narrative context. Their experience remains at the "viewable" level, lacking in-depth participation pathways that enable "learning and hands-on practice."

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 10, 2025) suggested that study programs and regular workshops could be used to allow tourists and young people to not only "view" but also "learn and practice."

⑤. Insufficient conversion of tourism flow into daily consumption: Currently, most services for tourists are temporary measures during festivals (such as temporary guidance and short-term performances). There is a lack of a long-term mechanism to convert "festival tourism flow" into "daily consumption," making it difficult for tourists' attention to translate into sustained driving force for the local economy.

Huang Jiamao (personal communication, February 10, 2025) emphasized: "Temporary measures during peak tourism periods are insufficient to form a regular cultural ecosystem. The government should establish a year-round operation mechanism to convert 'festival tourism flow' into 'daily consumption'."

In summary, the core contradiction in Shicheng lantern art regarding the participation of local villagers and the attention of outside tourists lies in the "disconnection between festival periods and ordinary days": Villagers' participation is characterized by "gathering during festivals and dispersing after festivals," while tourists' attention falls into the dilemma of "superficial viewing and fleeting enthusiasm." Going forward, it is necessary to break the constraints of time and experience depth by building regular activity venues, designing progressive experience courses, and

establishing a "flow-consumption" conversion mechanism—thereby achieving long-term maintenance of participation and attention levels.

4.1.1.3 The Connecting Role of Museums and Schools

Based on the results of field research and interviews, museums and schools have gradually assumed the role of "connectors" in the inheritance of Shicheng lantern art. However, there are still obvious shortcomings in the exertion of their functions. The specific current situation is as follows:

①. Museum exhibitions focus on attracting public attention, but the presentation of "artifacts — craftsmanship processes — stories" is fragmented: Museums effectively draw public attention to lantern art through physical displays (e.g., the dragon lantern model in Shicheng County Museum, shown in Figure 14). Nevertheless, the exhibition content mostly centers on finished artifacts and partial production processes, making it difficult to fully present the causal logic from frame formation to lantern assembly, and from color layer application to lighting installation. As a result, visitors cannot form a comprehensive understanding of the craftsmanship system.

Lai Weiming (personal communication, February 11, 2025) pointed out: "The demonstration of disassembled craftsmanship processes is crucial; otherwise, students will only see superficial displays, which are hard to internalize into skills. Without interaction with village communities, museums and schools are merely 'display windows' and cannot foster social practice."



Figure 17 Dragon Lantern Display Model in Shicheng County Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. School courses provide an entry point but are mostly short-term experiences with no progressive design: Schools create opportunities for young people to engage with lantern art through hands-on courses and club activities. However, most courses are one-off or short-term experiences, and fail to establish a progressive learning pathway of "entry-level processes → advanced modeling → collective production → public performance." As a result, young people struggle to move beyond "preliminary understanding" to "proficient mastery."

Chen Jie (personal communication, February 11, 2025) stated: "Courses offered by museums and schools are relatively short in duration. A 'progressive learning pathway' should be established to allow students to delve deeper step by step."

③. Museum-school collaboration lacks institutional guarantees and long-term sustainability: Current cooperation between museums and schools is mostly temporary, project-based linkage. Lantern craftsmanship systems have not been integrated into the local education curriculum, nor has special supporting funding been clearly allocated in museums' annual budgets. This makes the collaboration vulnerable

to staff changes and resource adjustments, and hinders the development of a long-term, stable inheritance mechanism.

Yu Xiaomin (personal communication, February 11, 2025) emphasized: "Institutional guarantees are needed—for example, integrating lantern craftsmanship into local education curricula and museums' annual budgets. Without this, long-term sustainability will be difficult to achieve."

④. Neither exhibitions nor courses have achieved an "experience upgrade," remaining at the "superficial viewing" level: Neither the exhibition design of museums nor the practical courses of schools fully "translates craftsmanship processes into perceptible knowledge units" or "converts symbolic connotations into participatory public narratives." Visitors and students still focus primarily on "viewing," lacking in-depth experiences that involve "hands-on practice and in-depth understanding." This makes it hard to achieve a shift from "watching the excitement" (superficial engagement) to "understanding the essence" (in-depth comprehension).

In summary, although museums and schools have become important forces in the inheritance of Shicheng lantern art, their core limitations lie in "fragmented exhibitions," "short-term courses," and "non-institutionalized collaboration." Going forward, efforts should be made to optimize exhibition logic, enhance the integrity of craftsmanship processes, design progressive courses, and establish institutional guarantees (integration into curricula, special budget allocation). These measures will drive museums and schools to transform from "display windows" to "in-depth inheritance platforms," and truly realize the daily transmission of lantern craftsmanship.

4.1.1.4 Policy Orientation and Resource Allocation

Based on relevant planning documents of the Shicheng County Government and field interviews, local policies play a key guiding role in promoting the development of lantern art. However, there remains a structural imbalance in resource allocation. The specific current situation is as follows:

①. Policies clearly outline the orientation of "integrating lantern art with tourism" and incorporate lantern art into key cultural resources: In 2022, the Shicheng County Government issued the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Culture and Tourism in Shicheng County (Document No. 14, 2022, issued by the General Office of Shicheng County Government). The plan explicitly positions lantern art as a key cultural resource for development, proposes the construction of new facilities such as a county-level cultural and art center and a comprehensive tourism exhibition hall, and promotes the initiative of "introducing lantern art into scenic areas" (e.g., arranging regular performances at the ancient stage in the Tongtianzhai Scenic Area). These measures have significantly enhanced the visibility and public discourse around lantern art.



Figure 18 Ancient Stage Architecture in Tongtianzhai Scenic Area, Shicheng County

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. A multi-stakeholder collaboration framework has been formed, with notable improvements in festival organization and safety standards: Driven by policies, local authorities have gradually established a collaboration framework involving "councils, village committees, cultural and tourism departments, and museum-school partnerships." During festivals, the organization of lantern activities has become more orderly; safety standards (such as crowd control and fire safety support) and collaboration with the county-level integrated media center have been strengthened. These efforts have effectively reduced activity risks and expanded the scope of communication.

③. Resources are concentrated on key-point activities, with insufficient investment in foundational work: Current policy resources are mostly tilted toward key-point activities such as festival performances and large-scale events, while investment in the foundational work of lantern art (e.g., oral history compilation, craftsmanship process archive establishment, artifact restoration, and educational content development) is inadequate. This creates a contrast between "lively festivals" and "weak daily foundations," making it difficult to support the long-term inheritance of craftsmanship.

Deng Song (personal communication, February 11, 2025) suggested: "Archive organization, digitalization, and basic research should be included in regular fiscal items, rather than only investing in festival performances."

④. The "integration of lantern art with tourism" is prone to risks of "over-performance and hollowing out," and the profit distribution mechanism is opaque: Although the tourism-oriented approach has increased the exposure of lantern art, the lack of simultaneous support for foundational craftsmanship processes can easily reduce the art to "superficial performances" that neglect the essence of craftsmanship. Meanwhile, the mechanism for distributing tourism profits among communities and craftsmen is unclear, which affects their enthusiasm for participation.

Wen Changlin (personal communication, February 11, 2025) pointed out: "The tourism-oriented approach has increased exposure, but without support for foundational craftsmanship processes, it is easy to cause 'over-performance and hollowing out.' Communities have gained more opportunities to participate, but if profit distribution is opaque, the enthusiasm of villagers and craftsmen will be undermined."

⑤. Policies overlook the development of teaching and learning pathways, with insufficient practical transformation: Existing policies mostly emphasize "performance and dissemination" and do not pay sufficient attention to the construction of a lantern craftsmanship teaching system and the design of learning pathways. As a result, young people and ordinary participants struggle to move from "appreciation" to "practice," and the "last mile" of craftsmanship inheritance remains unconnected.

In summary, Shicheng County's policies provide directional guidance and resource support for the development of lantern art, but the core issues lie in "imbalanced resource allocation" and "imperfect mechanisms": prioritizing key points over foundations, prioritizing performances over teaching, and prioritizing exposure over profit feedback. Going forward, it is necessary to clarify the resource proportion for basic research and teaching pathways in policies, establish a transparent profit feedback mechanism, and promote the transformation of "lantern art and tourism" from "superficial liveliness" to sustainable development with "solid connotations."

4.1.2 Comprehensive Impacts Brought by Changes

4.1.2.1 Craft Ecosystem

Based on craftsman interviews, craftsmanship process observations, and inheritance practices, the technical ecosystem of Shicheng lantern art presents a pattern of "positive foundations coexisting with practical challenges." The specific current situation is as follows:

①. Skill inheritance has a solid foundation of sentiment and willingness: Elderly craftsmen are generally willing to pass on lantern-making techniques. The community holds a strong emotional identification with and aesthetic expectation for lantern art, and schools and museums provide windows for the new generation to observe and gain entry into the craft. This has formed a preliminary inheritance atmosphere characterized by "masters willing to teach and accessible learning entry points."

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 10, 2025) emphasized: "Traditional craftsmanship processes are the foundation of the skill; innovation must be built on the premise of proficient mastery." This statement reflects the craftsman group's emphasis on skill inheritance.

②. Lack of daily training and progressive pathways leads to an unstable inheritance chain: Currently, the inheritance of lantern craftsmanship mostly relies on short-term intensive teaching before festivals. There is a lack of regular daily training mechanisms and clear progressive pathways (such as systematic training from basic bamboo splitting to complex modeling). As a result, learners struggle to develop their initial interest into proficient skills, and a stable skill inheritance chain has not yet been formed.

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 10, 2025) stated that contemporary society expects new visual changes in lanterns, but if the steps of traditional craftsmanship are abandoned, public recognition of lantern art will decrease. Persisting in practicing the craft on a daily basis is particularly important for preserving these traditional steps.



Figure 19 Framework of the Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author

③. Insufficient balance between innovation and tradition; overemphasis on appearance over fundamentals in teaching: Among some new entrants and in teaching activities, there is a tendency to "prioritize appearance design and lighting effects while downplaying traditional foundational craftsmanship processes." Without proper guidance, this could easily lead to the "disconnection from the roots" of the craft. Although innovation is necessary to adapt to the times, innovation lacking support from traditional craftsmanship processes will struggle to form a sustainable model for the development of the craft.

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 10, 2025) suggested: "Innovation should be integrated into teaching to prevent young people from only learning 'novel appearances' without understanding the 'basic skills'."

④. Lack of dedicated support limits craftsmen's motivation for innovation: At both the government and social levels, there are no dedicated funds or incentive mechanisms for innovation in lantern craftsmanship. When craftsmen attempt to innovate while preserving traditional processes, they must bear the costs of materials and time themselves, resulting in insufficient motivation for innovation.

Huang Jiamao (personal communication, February 10, 2025) pointed out: "The government should establish dedicated funds to encourage craftsmen to attempt innovation while preserving tradition, rather than 'blindly pursuing performance-oriented practices'."

In summary, the core contradiction in the technical ecosystem of Shicheng lantern craftsmanship lies in the misalignment between "strong willingness to inherit" and "weak supporting conditions": Emotional identification and willingness to teach lay the foundation, but the lack of daily training, progressive pathways, innovation support, and resource guarantees restricts the healthy development of the technical ecosystem. Going forward, it is necessary to achieve a balance between tradition and innovation by building a closed-loop system encompassing "classrooms, workshops, families, and performances" (to ensure training and practice), establishing dedicated innovation funds, and reducing rework costs (e.g., standardizing foundational craftsmanship processes). This will promote the sustainable development of the technical ecosystem.

4.1.2.2 Local Economy and Image

Based on festival passenger flow data, merchant interviews, and local image promotion efforts, the impact of lantern art on Shicheng's local economy and image presents the characteristic of "significant short-term driving effect but insufficient long-term conversion." The specific current situation is as follows:

①. Festivals drive short-term passenger flow and image exposure, boosting local visibility: During festivals such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival,

lantern performances attract a large number of local villagers and non-local tourists (see Figure 19 for the scene of tourists selecting lantern products). Short videos and official promotions (e.g., promotion by the county-level integrated media center) further amplify the communication effect, creating a "peak of attention." This has significantly enhanced Shicheng's local image as the "Hometown of Lantern Culture" and brought short-term passenger flow dividends to the local economy (such as increased consumption in catering and accommodation).



Figure 20 Tourists Selecting Lantern Products

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. Economic driving effect features "peak during festivals and decline after festivals," lacking regular support: The economic boost from lantern art is highly dependent on the "festival window." After festivals, passenger flow and consumption drop sharply, and no mechanism has been formed to convert "festival popularity into daily consumption." During regular periods, the development of lantern-related cultural and creative products and the operation of experience programs are relatively weak, making it difficult to continuously drive the local economy (e.g., workshops face a scarcity of daily orders and low tourist revisit rates).

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 10, 2025) stated: "Only regular orders can maintain the operation of lantern workshops; festival earnings alone are insufficient for sustainability."

③. Insufficient integration with rural tourism and markets, limiting the scope of profit sharing: Currently, the integration of lantern art with local rural tourism and community markets is relatively low, and no linked chain of "lantern experience — tourism consumption — community income growth" has been established. Some tourism profits are concentrated in the hands of a small number of entities, making it difficult for villagers and grassroots workshops to fully share the benefits. This affects their enthusiasm for participating in the promotion of lantern art.

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 10, 2025) suggested: "Only when lantern art is integrated with rural tourism and markets can villagers share in the profits."

④. Potential of study tourism is underutilized, with a single path for consumption conversion: Study tourism is an important potential path for lantern art to drive the economy. However, current study tourism activities mostly consist of superficial experiences such as "one-time visits and simple hands-on work," lacking in-depth design that includes "systematic learning, outcome output, and consumption extension"

(e.g., customized study tour works, purchase of cultural and creative products). This makes it difficult to convert the "student group" into a "sustained consumer group."

⑤. Lack of profit feedback mechanism, resulting in insufficient incentives for grassroots workshops and communities: In the development of lantern-related cultural and creative products and tourism revenue, there is no clear profit feedback mechanism (e.g., redirecting a portion of profits to grassroots workshops or community activities). As a result, after investing time and energy in inheriting craftsmanship, grassroots craftsmen and community organizations struggle to obtain corresponding economic returns, which may weaken their participation motivation in the long run.

In summary, lantern art has brought "short-term opportunities" to Shicheng's local economy and image, but its core shortcoming lies in "insufficient long-term conversion capabilities": over-reliance on festivals for passenger flow and profits, weak integration with tourism and markets, underutilized study tourism potential, and lack of profit feedback. Going forward, efforts should be made to set up regular venues integrating "artifact display — craftsmanship experience — small-scale markets," design in-depth study tourism courses, and establish a profit feedback mechanism. These measures will convert "festival peaks" into "daily economic drivers," achieving long-term, mutually reinforcing improvement of both the local image and the economy.

4.1.2.3 Social Relations and Community Governance

By observing the organization process of lantern activities and interviewing community stakeholders, it is found that lantern art is gradually transforming from a "festival custom" into a "carrier for community governance." Its specific impacts on social relations and governance are as follows:

①. Lantern activities promote multi-stakeholder collaboration and form a community cooperation network: The production and performance of lanterns require the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including councils (coordinating

routes and schedules), volunteers (guiding order), museum-school partnerships (providing explanations and experiences), and families (participating in implementation). Through long-term practice, the division of labor among various stakeholders has gradually become clear, forming a collaboration model of "temporary mobilization and regular linkage." Originally loose community relations have become closer due to the shared goal of lantern activities, establishing a new community cooperation network.

Wen Changlin (personal communication, February 11, 2025) pointed out: "The production and performance of lanterns require a high level of collaboration and are themselves a training ground for community cooperation. Lantern activities strengthen neighborhood ties and enhance community identity."

②. Young people integrate into the community through participation, optimizing intergenerational relations in the community: Schools and museums have incorporated lantern craftsmanship into their curricula (e.g., the Snake Lantern activity in the "First Lesson of the New Semester"), guiding young people to participate in lantern production and performances. This transforms young people from "community onlookers" into "participants." In the process of jointly completing lantern-making procedures with grandparents and parents, intergenerational communication and understanding are deepened, intergenerational relations in the community are optimized, and young forces are injected into community governance.

Liao Kezhi (personal communication, February 11, 2025) stated: "Schools and museums engage through curricula, encouraging young people to actively participate in community affairs."

③. Lantern activities serve as a "practice ground" for community governance, improving public governance efficiency: Issues involved in organizing lantern activities—such as venue coordination, resource allocation, crowd control, and profit negotiation—have driven the community to establish a "discussion-implementation-feedback" process. When the government participates in organization, it

has also gradually formed an institutionalized division of labor and negotiation mechanism (e.g., inter-departmental linkage). These experiences feed back into daily community governance, improving the efficiency and operability of public governance.

Deng Song (personal communication, February 11, 2025) noted: "In the process of organizing lantern activities, the government has gradually formed an institutionalized division of labor and negotiation mechanism, enhancing public governance efficiency."

④. Lantern art undertakes the function of public cultural services and strengthens community cohesion: As the collaboration mechanism becomes regularized, lantern art is no longer merely a "festival performance" but also assumes the role of public cultural services. For example, activities such as "telling history under lanterns" and "community performances" convey local culture and values. Community members gain a sense of belonging through joint participation, significantly strengthening community cohesion and laying an emotional foundation for the advancement of governance work.

In summary, the core value of lantern art to Shicheng's social relations and community governance lies in "building a collaboration network and a governance carrier": On the one hand, it optimizes social relations (neighborhood and intergenerational) through multi-stakeholder collaboration; on the other hand, it takes activity organization as a practical scenario to promote the improvement of governance mechanisms and efficiency. Going forward, it is necessary to further solidify the collaboration experience from lantern activities into community governance systems, while expanding public cultural service scenarios, so that lantern art can continue to empower community harmony and governance.

4.2 To analyze cultural identities and community relative since 2007-2024 through Lantern Art of ShiCheng.

The lantern art of Shicheng is not only presented as a "viewable festival custom" but also serves as a "collaborative social structure". It connects ancestral halls, temple fairs, streets and lanes, and squares into a repeatable and recognizable spatial path, while carrying local experiences through the imagery of lantern light, the formation of processions, and oral traditions. This section mainly explores two answer:

First, how has the sense of identity with local culture among people extended gradually from small circles such as families and villages to the entire locality and region over the more than ten years from 2007 to 2024. Moreover, under different circumstances, how has this sense of identity been repeatedly emphasized and endowed with new meanings.

Second, how have the relationships between individuals and between groups in the community changed from the previous state of "being temporarily mobilized only when there are activities" to the current state of "taking the initiative to cooperate in daily life" And how to gradually transform the model of "gathering people together through festivals" into a fixed practice in daily governance.

4.2.1 Cultural Identity and Community Relations

4.2.1.1 Cultural identity is a dual combination of "internal emotional cohesion and external expression"

The cultural identity of Shicheng lantern art includes both the internal emotional cohesion within families and villages (e.g., "the lantern customs of our clan") and the external image expression at the local and regional levels (e.g., Shicheng lantern art as a "local business card"). The formation of this identity does not stem from merely "watching lanterns" but from the physical practice of "participating in production, performance, and organization." Only through the process of "doing" can individuals transform from "onlookers" to "identifiers and guardians."

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 12, 2025) pointed out: "A sense of identity is not directly generated by watching; instead, it is embodied through physical practice in the process of 'doing.'"

4.2.1.2 Community relations are a dynamic system of "diverse stakeholders and collaborative networks"

Community relations are formed around lantern art, covering diverse stakeholders such as lantern councils, volunteers, schools, museums, villagers, and tourists. The form of these relations is gradually shifting from "temporary mobilization during festivals" to "regular linkage in daily life." However, there is still a need to strengthen the weaving of "strong ties (clan relations)" and "weak ties (neighborhoods, tourists, returned young people)" to prevent the relational network from being active only during festivals and becoming loose afterward.

Huang Jiamao (personal communication, February 12, 2025) stated: "The key to community relations lies in weaving together 'strong ties' and 'weak ties.' Through the linkage of lantern councils, schools, and volunteers, we can transform festival-time mobilization into regular 'small-scale collaboration' on weekends, keeping the relational network in a 'warm-start' state even during non-festival periods."

4.2.1.3 Identity and relations empower each other, forming a "practice-identity-collaboration" cycle

The practice of lantern art (production and performance) fosters cultural identity, which in turn drives community stakeholders to participate in collaboration. The trust and rapport formed during collaboration further strengthen the identity with the shared symbol of "Shicheng lanterns," creating a positive cycle. For example, when family members jointly make snake lanterns, it not only deepens their identity with the family's lantern customs but also consolidates the internal relations of the family; when the community and tourists jointly participate in lantern processions, it not only disseminates local identity but also expands the community's external collaborative relations.

In summary, the core characteristic of the cultural identity and community relations of Shicheng lantern art lies in "participation": Identity needs to be formed through "doing," and relations need to be consolidated through "collaboration." The main current shortcomings are the "lack of daily participation scenarios" and "insufficient weaving of ties." Going forward, it is necessary to design regular

participation programs (such as weekend workshops and community lantern exhibitions) and build a collaborative platform for diverse stakeholders. This will promote the transformation of identity from "festival awakening" to "daily internalization" and the transformation of relations from "temporary gathering" to "regular coexistence."

4.2.2 Phased Perspective: From Continuity to Governance-Oriented Evolution

Combined with the timeline from 2007 to 2024 and the development characteristics of lantern art, the evolution of its cultural identity and community relations can be divided into three stages. The current situation and core characteristics of each stage are as follows.

4.2.2.1 Continuity Maintenance Period (2007—2012)

①. The inheritance scene centers on families and ancestral halls, with craftsmanship transmission relying on "tacit knowledge": During this stage, lantern art mainly served internal rituals of families and villages, and the inheritance scene was concentrated in family workshops and ancestral halls (see Figure 20 for villagers placing lanterns in the ancestral hall to prepare for the formation of the snake lantern). The transmission of craftsmanship was mostly accomplished through intergenerational joint participation (e.g., elderly family members guiding the younger generation in lantern-making), relying on "oral instruction and mental comprehension" of tacit knowledge (such as the "sense of touch" for frame proportions and the "strength" for pasting paper). There was a lack of an institutionalized training system.

Li Nanchang (personal communication, February 12, 2025) pointed out: "The stability during this period came from the transmission of 'tacit knowledge' in family workshops and ancestral halls. Although there was a lack of institutionalized training, intergenerational joint participation maintained the sense of proportion and rhythm in the craftsmanship processes. The risk lies in the fact that this knowledge was highly dependent on individual masters; once a master migrated or switched occupations, the inheritance chain would immediately become fragile."



Figure 21 Villagers' Lanterns Stored in Their Respective Ancestral Halls Awaiting Assembly into the Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author

②. Cultural identity was "inner-cohesive," emphasizing the boundaries of "small circles": Identity was mainly centered around "families and villages," with villagers defining their identity by "our branch of the family, our clan." Lantern activities were small in scale and relatively closed in circle, which strengthened internal emotional cohesion but also restricted connections with external resources.

Huang Jiamao (personal communication, February 12, 2025) stated: "The community had a strong 'inner-cohesive consensus' but weak external narration. Small-scale and relatively closed-circle activities reinforced the boundary of

'our clan' yet limited the expansion of connections and mutual assistance with external resources."

③. Community relations were dominated by "clan ties," with collaboration being "spontaneous": Most participants in community lantern activities were relatives of the same clan, and the relational network centered on clan ties. The organization of activities relied on the personal authority of family elders, and the collaboration process lacked clear division of labor and institutional constraints, showing the characteristics of being "spontaneous and loose." No cross-family or cross-village collaboration mechanism was formed.

In summary, the core characteristic of this stage was "the closedness of traditional continuity": Families and ancestral halls ensured the continuity of craftsmanship and identity, but "tacit inheritance, inner-cohesive identity, and spontaneous collaboration" also restricted its development, resulting in weak risk resistance (e.g., craftsmanship discontinuity caused by the loss of masters) and difficulties in accessing external resources.

4.2.2.2 Activation and Spillover Period (2013—2018)

①. Media and cultural tourism involvement drove the shift of inheritance scenarios from "closed" to "open": With the involvement of mobile media (e.g., short videos) and local cultural and tourism authorities, the audience structure of lantern art changed—apart from local villagers, non-local tourists became an important group. Inheritance scenarios extended from "family ancestral halls" to "temple fairs and squares" (see Figure 21 for the scene where people record lantern teams and set off firecrackers to welcome them), turning lantern art into a gathering point for "social attention." The rituals also showed stronger "performative qualities" (e.g., more emphasis on visual impact in the formation of lantern teams, and consideration of "photographability" when stopping at key spots).



Figure 22 People Recording the Passing Lantern Procession and Welcoming It with Firecrackers

Source: Hakka Folk Custom - Shicheng Snake Lantern

Retrieved from <https://www.meipian.cn/150nqkql?from=groupmessage>

②. Cultural identity shifted from "inner cohesion" to "external diffusion," with initial strengthening of local identity: Attention and evaluations from non-local tourists drove the local community to shift from "internal cohesion" to "external expression"—villagers became more proactive in introducing the history and implied meanings of lanterns to tourists. "Shicheng Lantern Art" gradually transformed from an "internal festival custom" to a "local calling card," and the scope of cultural identity expanded from "families and villages" to the "Shicheng region."

Liao Kezhi (personal communication, February 12, 2025) stated: "The enhanced performativity has improved 'viewability,' but it has also amplified the preference for appearance and lighting effects. Without simultaneous strengthening of

craftsmanship process training, a misalignment of 'visual effects first, craftsmanship lagging behind' is likely to occur, which will weaken the durability and reproducibility of works in the long run."

③."Weak ties" were introduced into community relations, and collaboration took on a "bridging" nature: "Non-clan" participants such as tourists and returned young people joined lantern activities, expanding community relations from "strong clan ties" to "weak ties with neighbors and outsiders." Collaboration between cultural and tourism departments and villages promoted the growth of "bridging social capital," but such collaboration remained mainly "project-based" (e.g., organizing lantern exhibitions in coordination with cultural and tourism activities) and had not yet formed a regular mechanism.

Wen Changlin (personal communication, February 12, 2025) pointed out: "External attention has contributed to the growth of 'bridging social capital,' and interactions between villagers, tourists, and returned young people have increased. It is necessary to reserve a 'community self-narration' segment in the ritual script to prevent external gaze from overshadowing local voices."

In summary, the core characteristic of this stage was "activation amid openness": Media and cultural tourism broke the closed pattern, enabling the diffusion of identity and expansion of relations. However, it also faced challenges such as "the risk of over-performativity" and "weakening of local voices," making it necessary to strike a balance between "external communication" and "internal foundations."

4.2.2.3 Governance and Branding Period (2019—2024)

①.The collaboration mechanism has been institutionalized, with governance attributes becoming prominent: The collaboration among councils, volunteers, schools, museums, and government functional departments has stabilized, forming an institutionalized framework featuring "clear division of labor and standardized procedures." For instance, the county-level integrated media center conducts advance

research, on-site interviews, and external promotions (see Figure 22). The organization of lantern activities no longer relies on individual authority but progresses through "discussion-based consultation and division of responsibilities." Meanwhile, lantern activities assume the functions of public cultural services and community governance (e.g., coordinating community resources through lantern activities).



Figure 23 Host of Shicheng County Integrated Media Center Promoting the Snake Lantern

Source: Promotional Video of Shicheng County Integrated Media Center
Retrieved from the Official WeChat Channel of Shicheng Release

②. Cultural identity features "multi-level superimposition," with a distinct branding trend: It covers multiple levels simultaneously—"family, village, locality, and region." At the family level, memories of traditional lantern customs are preserved; at the local level, brand awareness of "Shicheng Lantern Art" is strengthened; at the

regional level, it is integrated into the narrative of "cultural eco-zones." The government takes the lead in promoting the public narrative of "lantern art, tourism, and education," further expanding the brand influence of lantern art. However, there is also a risk of "prioritizing the brand over content."

Lai Weiming (personal communication, February 10, 2025) pointed out: "Branding tends to pursue standardization, but standardization should not be equated with 'homogenization.' It is recommended to establish 'master workshops and youth innovation camps,' encouraging variations and micro-innovations on the premise of preserving core craftsmanship processes, and conducting quality evaluation based on two dimensions: compliance with craftsmanship processes and incremental creativity."

③. Community relations are characterized by "regular linkage," yet resource allocation is uneven: Community relations have shifted from "project-based collaboration" to "regular linkage." For example, schools offer regular lantern courses, and museums host long-term exhibitions. However, branding has also led to the concentration of resources in core villages, leaving marginal villages with fewer participation opportunities and easily causing a sense of identity gap.

Yu Xiaomin (personal communication, February 10, 2025) suggested: "Branding tends to concentrate resources in core villages, marginalizing peripheral villages. It is advocated to establish an inter-village rotation and co-creation mechanism, and use inter-village alliances to reduce the identity gap caused by imbalance."

In summary, the core characteristic of this stage is "governance-driven branding": Institutionalized collaboration has improved efficiency and influence, and identity has become multi-leveled. However, "hollow branding" and "uneven resource allocation" have emerged as new challenges. Sustainable development needs

to be achieved through "content support and strengthened craftsmanship processes" as well as "fair mechanisms and inter-village co-creation."

4.2.3 The Emergence and Transformation of Cultural Identity: From the Imagery of Lantern Light to Public Narrative

Combined with the symbolic significance and practical scenarios of Shicheng lantern art, the formation and transformation of its cultural identity follow a path of "from emotional evocation to identity superimposition, and from individual experience to public narrative." The specific current situation is as follows:

4.2.3.1 Emotional Evocation and Symbolic System

The image of lantern light serves as the "emotional starting point" of identity, which is reinforced through "physical practice": The formation of the snake lantern during its "Da Tuan Wei" (a traditional collective performance where the lantern team forms a circular formation) and the flowing lantern shadows in the night (see Figure 23 for the scene of onlookers when the snake lantern circles) constitute an aesthetic scene of "collective viewing" for the people of Shicheng. Through the physical practice of "holding lanterns and marching, responding to slogans," participants gain a sense of belonging to "the present moment"—each individual's actions are responsible for the integrity and order of the lantern team. This "shared responsibility" condenses scattered daily emotions into a tangible symbol of lantern light, endowing the identity of "who we are" with a concrete carrier.

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 12, 2025) suggested: "Allow participants to experience emotional evocation again in the process of 'doing'; for example, set up sessions of 'night practice and lantern-lighting re-performance' to bind muscle memory with emotional memory, thereby enhancing the intrinsic motivation for sustained participation."



Figure 24 Crowd of Onlookers During the Snake Lantern's Circling Process

Source: Photographed by the Author

In summary, the lantern light not only illuminates the festival nights but also defines the boundaries of "us". It converges the scattered daily emotions into a tangible symbol at a certain moment, naturally combining the thoughts of "who we remember" and "for whom we create".

4.2.3.2 Identity Superposition and Hierarchization

①. Identity presents "multi-level superimposition" rather than "substitutional" development: With the increase in external attention, the boundaries of identity have gradually expanded from "family and village" to "locality and region". However, identities at various levels do not replace each other but coexist in a

superimposed manner. When making lanterns in ancestral halls, "family inheritance" is emphasized; when performing in scenic areas, "Shicheng Lantern Art" is highlighted; and during regional cultural exchanges, "eco-zone symbol" is stressed. In different scenarios, individuals selectively activate the identity of the corresponding level, forming a "pluralistic and integrated" identity structure.

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 12, 2025) pointed out: "Address the narrative competition through the 'craftsmanship process genealogy'—that is, a complete system of handicraft steps—so that different villages and families share the same set of handicraft standards. This not only allows each family and village to showcase their own distinctive practices but also enables the formation of a unified standard recognized by all within the county."

②. Public narratives promote the "external communication" of identity, but "homogenization" must be avoided: Through public narratives such as "lantern culture festivals", "study tours", and "integrated media promotions", the government, museums, and schools have transformed the identity of lantern art from "internal experience" to "external communication", making "Shicheng Lantern Art" a local symbol recognizable to the outside world. However, if public narratives overemphasize the "standardized brand", they may easily overlook the distinctive details of families and villages, leading to the "homogenization" of identity.

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 12, 2025) suggested: "We need to introduce 'arrangements that allow everyone to participate'. For example, when the lantern team stops at a designated area, different village groups take turns telling their own stories. This can reduce the imbalance between central and marginal areas regarding 'who speaks and what to say', ensuring that voices from both sides are heard."

With the arrival of visitors and the entry of media, the answer to "who we are" no longer only refers to families or villages but also incorporates self-narratives of the locality and region. The clan identity in ancestral halls, the village identity at temple fairs, and the neighborhood identity in streets and lanes together support the local identity of "Shicheng Lantern Art". Outer-layer narratives (such as "eco-zone" and "cultural brand") bring the local identity into the dialogue field of regions and cities. As a result, identity presents a hierarchical nature: different levels do not replace each other but appear in a superimposed manner, and are selectively emphasized in different contexts.

4.2.3.3 Learning Pathways and Intergenerational Transmission

Intergenerational transmission relies on a "progressive learning pathway," which remains weak at present: The family is the primary unit for the intergenerational transmission of identity (e.g., elderly family members teaching the younger generation to make lanterns), but stable transmission requires the support of public institutions such as schools and museums. Through a progressive pathway of "learning basic craftsmanship processes — practicing advanced modeling — conducting collective performances," young people can internalize their identity in the process of "observing — learning — doing." Currently, most school courses are short-term experiences, and a progressive pathway has not yet been established, which affects the intergenerational continuity of identity.

Lai Weiming (personal communication, February 12, 2025): "We should build a 'basic-intermediate-complex' skill gradient, covering skill nodes such as bamboo strip selection and splitting, frame proportioning and joint crafting, pasting and shaping, painting and lighting installation, and team drill practice. Additionally, phased work evaluation should be set up. At the same time, a mentoring system integrating 'families, workshops, and community activities' should be established to encourage

cross-generational pairing and mutual assistance, integrating learning into daily life scenarios."

Chen Jie (personal communication, February 12 2025): "We should cooperate with schools to implement a weekly and monthly learning system. For example, 1 hour of theory classes, 2 hours of workshop practice per week, and 4 hours of public performances per month. Academic credits and portfolio requirements can be used to drive young people's sustained engagement."



Figure 25 The Snake Lantern Entering Campus

Source: Shicheng's "First Class of the New Semester" Launches "Colorful Classrooms"

Retrieved from https://learning.sohu.com/a/581717241_121123843

In summary, the formation path of Shicheng lantern cultural identity is "emotional evocation (lantern light imagery) – identity superimposition (multi-level identity) – public communication (narrative output)". The core challenges lie in "incomplete intergenerational transmission pathways" and "the risk of homogenization in public narratives". Going forward, it is necessary to build a progressive learning pathway (to ensure intergenerational transmission) and reserve space for diverse narratives (to avoid homogenization), so that the identity can both "take root in tradition" and "face the outside world", achieving continuous formation and transformation.

4.2.4 The Reweaving of Community Relations: From Events to Mechanisms

Based on the organizational practice and stakeholder interaction of Shicheng lantern activities, community relations are shifting from "temporary gatherings driven by festival events" to "regular collaboration supported by mechanisms". The specific current situation is as follows:

4.2.4.1 From Event-Based Mobilization to Regular Collaboration

Shifting from "event-based mobilization" to "regular collaboration", the division of labor and mechanisms have gradually become clear: In the early stage, community participation in lantern activities was mostly characterized by "temporary mobilization before festivals and dissolution after festivals", with collaboration being "loose and spontaneous"; currently, a division of labor system featuring "overall coordination by councils, implementation by volunteers, support by museums and schools, and guarantee by the government" has been formed, and a regular mechanism of "pre-event discussion, mid-event implementation, and post-event feedback" has been established (e.g., monthly coordination meetings for lantern activities). As a result, community relations have transformed from "one-time gatherings" to "sustained interaction".

Yang Yuanyu (personal communication, February 12, 2025): Establish workshops led by cultural and tourism departments in major towns where lantern activities are held. Create a fixed work schedule based on annual festival

activities, and classify orders according to different performance areas and targets. This ensures that workshops can maintain a collaborative rhythm both during holidays and on regular days, without significant gaps. At the same time, clarify the division of labor for each role: for example, councils, village groups, volunteers, returned young people, and merchants must have clear responsibilities. Then, assign tasks according to different stages, and finally form a fixed cooperation process—such as defining "who is responsible for connection and communication, and who is responsible for follow-up and closing work".

Chen Muxing (personal communication, February 12, 2025): The model of "letting students learn while serving" can be integrated into the cooperation process. For instance, arrange for students to work as narrators of lantern stories, shoot videos to record the process, or take charge of planning small-scale exhibitions within schools. This approach not only eases the pressure of staff shortage but also cultivates young people's abilities and develops the capacity of the new generation. Conduct monthly reporting and summary sessions, and establish a mechanism of "identifying problems, solving them, and closing the loop after resolution". This ensures that the collaboration is not a "temporary stopgap" but evolves into a long-term model supported by fixed systems.

Festival mobilization brings various stakeholders together in the short term: Councils coordinate routes and schedules, government volunteers maintain order and provide guidance, the county-level integrated media center undertakes explanation and experience services, and traffic police are responsible for safety and emergency response. With the accumulation of collaboration experience, the division of labor has gradually become clear, and the discussion procedures and liaison mechanisms have become regularized. Community relations have transformed from "one-time gatherings" to "sustained cooperation". A public collaboration network has taken shape through lantern art, which in turn supports the sustainable operation of Shicheng lantern art.

4.2.4.2 The Coupling of Space, People, and Regular Training

The coupling of "space, people, and training" creates new scenarios for community interaction: The route of lantern activities covering "ancestral halls, temple fairs, streets, and squares" (see Figure 25 for the scene where government volunteers, firefighters, and police officers maintain order during the snake lantern procession) is not merely a physical path, but a coupled carrier integrating "space, people, and training". Specifically, lantern-making training takes place in ancestral halls, neighborhood interactions occur in streets, and collective performances are completed in squares. Stakeholders of different ages and identities (elderly people teaching craftsmanship, young people conducting promotions, and police ensuring safety) perform their respective duties in these spaces, forming an interactive network with "diverse stakeholders and diverse scenarios". This drives community relations to shift from "single kinship-based ties" to "diverse symbiosis".

Lai Weiming (personal communication, February 12, 2025): Transform the training venue into a "third space" — a public area that serves both as a performance venue and a workplace. This not only improves space utilization but also brings elderly people and young people together in the same space, enabling interaction between the audience, producers, and trainees. Additionally, small markets can be set up near the training venue, along with tea and refreshment services and rest areas. Such arrangements will make the space more appealing for people to visit and help strengthen bonds among community members.

Yu Xiaomin (personal communication, February 12, 2025): Establish organic links between training venue spaces, museums, and schools. Set up "learning stations" and prepare task cards, where students can record their progress each time they master a skill, allowing them to clearly track what they have learned. Moreover, "mobile small workshops" can be arranged on school campuses. These workshops can be easily moved to different locations for teaching purposes, eliminating the need to be confined to a fixed site.



Figure 26 Government Volunteers, Firefighters, and Police Maintaining Order as the Snake Lantern Marches Through the Village

Source: Photographed by the Author

The route of "ancestral halls — temple fairs — streets — squares" is not merely a path; it dictates the rhythm of crowd movement and emotional fluctuations: starting at the ancestral hall, making an appearance in front of the temple, passing through the streets, and reconvening and concluding at the square. The positioning of government volunteers, the division of police duty zones, the turning of the procession, and the stopping at key nodes all constitute details of "discipline". It is precisely this predictable order that enables seamless collaboration among different stakeholders, transforms "watching" into "participation", and thereby fosters new social connections.

4.2.4.3 Negotiation of Resources, Rights, and Responsibilities

In the process of collaboration, the allocation of venues, materials, time, and benefits inevitably becomes part of the agenda. Who will contribute personnel and effort, who will maintain the artifacts and roads, who will organize explanations and experiences, and how to channel back the benefits after activities—the negotiation and transparency of these issues form a practice ground for community governance. Lantern art thus triggers a cycle of "rights and responsibilities – resources – identity": reasonable benefit feedback and transparent division of labor, in turn, enhance the participants' sense of legitimacy and belonging.

Wen Changlin (personal communication, February 12, 2025): First of all, we must effectively institutionalize the daily practice of craftsmanship and form a stable echelon of craftsmanship proficiency. For example, we should clarify who are novices and who are veterans, and establish clear quality evaluation standards. Without a solid foundation in craftsmanship, it will be difficult to sustain efforts in branding or participating in cultural performances in the long run. We need to convert the popularity during festivals into daily relational ties, and establish mechanisms for inter-village co-creation and role rotation to prevent the centralization of resources and narratives from causing fragmentation in cultural identity.

Deng Song (personal communication, February 12, 2025): We should quickly connect the curriculum systems of schools, museums, and workshops, and match them with a corresponding certification system. For instance, issue a certificate when a person masters the skills of a certain stage, allowing young people to accumulate records of their works in practical projects and also develop their ability to express themselves in public settings.

4.2.5 Summary

What makes Shicheng lantern art moving is not only the light, shadow and shapes in the night, but more importantly, it grounds the answer to "who we are" in repeatable actions: some light the lanterns, some hold them aloft, some guard them, and some narrate their stories. In Shicheng from 2007 to 2024, it is precisely through

such visible and tangible actions that cultural identity has expanded from families and villages to the local and regional levels, and community relations have been forged from festival mobilization into public collaboration. As long as we enrich the substance and consolidate the mechanisms, lantern art will, on the premise that "traditions remain intact", continue to weave people, places and time into an integral whole.

4.3 Major Festivals and Lantern Applications

Lantern art activities in Shicheng have permeated every aspect of the daily life of local residents. Lanterns are indispensable on occasions ranging from weddings and prayers for healthy seedlings to harvest celebrations, family reunions, and birthday blessings for the elderly. However, large-scale lantern art events are mainly held during the Spring Festival and the Lantern Festival. Therefore, this section elaborates on these two festivals in detail.

4.3.1 Spring Festival (Chinese New Year's Eve and the First Day of the Lunar New Year)

This is the period when lantern activities in Shicheng are the most concentrated and grandest throughout the year. During this time, lantern troupes are invited to stage various lantern shows for celebration. These events, centered on welcoming good fortune and praying for a bumper harvest, carry distinct regional characteristics.

Lantern Types Applied: Large-scale lanterns with strong ritual significance, such as Dragon Lanterns, Lion Lanterns, and Bamboo Pole Lanterns. Also, vivid and highly ornamental lanterns including Tea Basket Lanterns, Lotus Lanterns, and Carp Lanterns take part in parades and performances.

Connotations and Impacts: On Chinese New Year's Eve, every household goes to the ancestral hall to welcome lanterns, pray for good fortune, stay up late, and gather for the New Year feast. On the first day of the Lunar New Year, firecrackers are set off and gongs and drums are beaten to send lanterns as a way of paying homage to ancestors. Every family in the village welcomes the lanterns to invoke good luck, prosperity, and the prosperity of both descendants and wealth. These

activities primarily embody the themes of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new, honoring ancestors and praying for blessings, and strengthening clan and community identity. As the largest annual public ritual in Shicheng County, it exerts an influence covering all villagers and foreign tourists.

4.3.2 Lantern Festival (the 15th Day of the First Lunar Month)

This day marks the first full moon night of the new year, hence the name "Lantern Festival". Various festive activities themed around "celebration" take place across Shicheng. These include folk customs like going out to admire the moon, lighting lanterns and setting off fireworks, guessing lantern riddles, and eating glutinous rice balls together, as well as lantern art events such as the Snake Lantern in Dayou Township and the Banqiao Lantern in Mulan Township, all expressing people's wishes to worship their ancestors.

Lantern Types Applied: The events mainly feature the Snake Lantern of Dayou Township and the Banqiao Lantern of Mulan Township.

Connotations and Impacts: The Snake Lantern of Dayou Township consists of a snake head, a snake tail, and a middle body formed by hundreds of thick wooden boards equipped with dustpan lanterns linked together, creating a long snake formation. Every year on the night of the 15th day of the first lunar month, the lantern procession assembles at Jiangdong Temple, parades through farmlands, riversides, and villages, and finally concludes with a ritual held on an open square.



Figure 27 Schematic Diagram of the Composition of the Snake Lantern in Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

The Banqiao Lantern of Mulan Township is composed of a rooster head, a rooster tail, and a middle body connected by wooden boards. In leap years or leap months, on the Lantern Festival, the lantern assembly starts at Zhenjun Temple in the village, proceeds to the courtyard of Mulan Township Government to join up all lantern segments, and then marches in sequence through village groups including Jieshang, Zhuxie, and Tulouxia. After touring all the villages, the procession circles around Jiangkongping and finally returns to the original site of Zhenjun Temple to finish with the "lantern thanking" ritual.



Figure 28 Schematic Diagram of the Composition of the Banqiao Lantern in Mulan Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

This custom has evolved into a grand local folk event that every household participates in. It is intended to ward off disasters, pray for good fortune and auspiciousness, and bless the nation with peace, the people with wellbeing, and the fields with abundant harvests of all grains.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims to summarize and reflect on the change trajectory, community cultural significance, and impact mechanism of Shicheng Lantern Art from 2007 to 2024. By integrating the research findings, this chapter will systematically address the research questions, clarify the academic contributions of this study, and put forward suggestions on future research directions, with a view to providing theoretical references and practical paths for the sustainable inheritance of Shicheng Lantern Art and community cultural governance.

Shicheng lanterns feature a combination of simplicity and magnificence. Their modeling is derived from life, with strong colors and dance postures that blend hardness and softness, embodying the pragmatic, optimistic, and tenacious aesthetic orientation formed by Hakka people during their arduous migration. They carry the collective spirit of expelling evil spirits and avoiding disasters, praying for good fortune and auspiciousness, reproduction of life (The pronunciation of the Chinese character 灯 *dēng* (meaning "lantern") is the same as that of the local dialect word 丁 *dīng* (meaning "descendant") in Shicheng), reverence for nature, and gratitude to ancestors. They also reflect the Hakka social ethics of clan unity, mutual assistance among neighbors, respect for traditions, and emphasis on inheritance. The cooperation in lantern activities itself is the performance and practice of these values.

By creating "nested cultural identity", Shicheng lanterns unite people's hearts at the family, local, and regional levels, becoming a "cultural adhesive" for social stability. Lantern activities have cultivated social trust, cooperation norms, and community networks, which have been transformed into effective community governance capabilities, helping to solve public affairs and promote internal harmony of the community. They provide a common topic and cooperation scenario for the elderly and young people, optimize intergenerational relations, and ensure the intergenerational transmission of local knowledge at the family and community levels.

Through field investigations, this study finds that Shicheng Lantern Art presents a complex landscape between continuity and change. On the one hand, highly symbolic lantern types such as the Snake Lantern and Banqiao Lantern still maintain living inheritance locally, serving as indispensable core elements of festivals during the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival every year. Their production craftsmanship and performance forms have been sustained and strengthened with the dual support of the community and the government. On the other hand, some lantern types have gradually faded from the public stage—such as the Boat Lantern, Kylin Lantern, Phoenix Lantern, Eight Immortals Lantern, Clam Shell Lantern, and Twelve Zodiac Lantern. Large-scale performances of these lanterns have been rarely seen in recent years, and they are mostly preserved in the oral memories of senior craftsmen, entries in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) lists, or museums and exhibition halls. Based on field investigations, this study has compiled the "Table of Current Distribution of Lantern Types in Shicheng County" (in Table 4). This table sorts out the inheritance status and corresponding reasons of various lanterns according to the administrative divisions within Shicheng County, laying a foundation for analyzing the factors influencing the changes of Shicheng Lantern Art and its associated community relations.

Table 4 Current Distribution of Lantern Types in Shicheng County


Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
Administrative Regions	Types of Lanterns	Picture	Inheritance Status	Changes in Inheritance Spaces
1. Qinjiang Town	Boat Lantern		Partial inheritance	Qinjiang Town does not organize independent performances; instead, its lantern shows frequently appear in school teaching sessions, scenic area exhibitions, and large-scale event performances.

Table 4 (Continued)





Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
2.Gaotian Town	Qilin Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	Qinjiang Town does not organize independent performances; its lantern shows only appear in museums, exhibition halls, and large-scale event performances.
	Phoenix Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	Qinjiang Town does not organize independent performances; its lantern shows only appear in museums, exhibition halls, and large-scale event performances.
	Carp Lantern		Normal inheritance	Gaotian Town organizes performances irregularly. The lantern types here are commonly used across towns and townships, featuring a high degree of standardization that makes them easy for lantern teams to master. These lantern shows often appear in large-scale event performances.
	Lion Lantern		Partial inheritance	Gaotian Town organizes performances irregularly, which are often staged together with dragon lanterns, and such lantern performance traditions are preserved by all grassroots lantern teams.

Table 4 (Continued)





Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
3.Fengshan Township	Eight Immortals Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	Fengshan Township does not organize independent performances; instead, its lantern performance elements have evolved into a segment or a narrative part of lantern shows.
	Clam Shell Lantern		Partial inheritance	Fengshan Township does not organize independent performances; its lantern shows appear in large-scale exhibitions, and the lantern teams here have preserved such performance traditions.
4.Mulan Township	Banqiao Lantern		Normal inheritance	In Mulan Township, performances will be organized during the New Year when there is an intercalary month in a leap year. These performances require the collaboration of hundreds of people and involve parading along the main streets of the village.
	Tea Basket Lantern		Normal inheritance	Mulan Township does not organize independent performances; instead, its lantern shows frequently appear in performances at scenic spots and festival events, and they are also a core content in school teaching materials.

Table 4 (Continued)





Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
5.Xiaosong Town	Lotus Lantern		Normal inheritance	Xiaosong Town organizes performances irregularly, which often appear in scenic spot exhibitions and large-scale event performances together with carp lanterns.
	Carp Lantern		Normal inheritance	Xiaosong Town organizes performances irregularly. The lantern types here are commonly used across towns and townships, featuring a high degree of standardization that makes them easy for lantern teams to master. These lantern shows often appear in large-scale event performances.
6.Pingshan Town	Bench Dragon Lantern		Normal inheritance	It has low production costs (based on benches) and is suitable for small-scale performances in campuses and communities.
	Bamboo pole Lantern		Partial inheritance	Pingshan Town does not organize independent performances. Its lantern shows require a combination of bamboo poles and long lanterns, have high venue requirements, and only appear in large-scale event performances and festival shows.

Table 4 (Continued)









Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
7.Dayou Township	Snake Lantern		Normal inheritance	Every year during the Lantern Festival, Zhuolong Village of Dayou Township organizes performances, which require the collaboration of hundreds of people and involve parading along the main streets of the village.
	Copper Coin Lantern		Partial inheritance	Dayou Township does not organize independent performances; its lantern shows only appear in large-scale event performances and festival shows.
	Dragon Lantern		Normal inheritance	Dayou Township does not organize independent performances. The lantern types here are basic ones that are typically performed during festivals, and they are standard equipment for all township-level lantern teams. These lantern shows often appear in large-scale event performances and festival shows.

Table 4 (Continued)

Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
8.Longgang Township	Dragon Lantern		Normal inheritance	Longgang Township does not organize independent performances. The lantern types here are basic ones that are typically performed during festivals, and they are standard equipment for all township-level lantern teams. These lantern shows often appear in large-scale event performances and festival shows.
	Tea Basket Lantern		Normal inheritance	Longgang Township does not organize independent performances; instead, its lantern shows frequently appear in performances at scenic spots and festival events, and they are also a core content in school teaching materials.
	Lotus Lantern		Normal inheritance	Longgang Township organizes performances irregularly, which often appear in scenic spot exhibitions and large-scale event performances together with carp lanterns.

Table 4 (Continued)

Current Distribution Status of Shicheng County's Lantern Types				
9.Hengjiang Town	Twelve Chinese zodiac signs Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	There is no fixed performance venue; it only appears in museums and exhibition halls.
	Gao Qiao Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	There is no fixed performance venue; it only appears in museums and exhibition halls.
10.Zhukeng Township	Tea Basket Lantern		Normal inheritance	Zhukeng Township does not organize independent performances; instead, its lantern shows frequently appear in performances at scenic spots and festival events, and they are also a core content in school teaching materials.
	Pole Dragon Lantern		Facing the risk of extinction	There is no fixed performance venue; it only appears in museums and exhibition halls.
	Horse Lantern		Normal inheritance	Zhukeng Township organizes performances irregularly. The lantern types here are commonly used across towns and townships, featuring a high degree of standardization that makes them easy for lantern teams to master.

5.1 Research Summary

Focusing on the changes of Shicheng Lantern Art over the past seventeen years (2007–2024), this study systematically analyzes the complex landscape of continuity and transformation of this local festival custom in the process of modernization. The research finds that Shicheng Lantern Art is not a static "intangible cultural heritage" (ICH) or a mere visual performance; instead, it is a dynamic cultural system deeply embedded in local society and continuously interacting with the external environment. Its changes are the result of the intertwined effects of multi-dimensional forces.

5.1.1 Multi-dimensional Drivers of Changes in Shicheng Lantern Art

The changes in Shicheng Lantern Art can be attributed to the combined effects of four dimensions: craftsmanship inheritance, community participation, institutional involvement, and policy orientation, with significant contradictions existing within each dimension. These factors have jointly shaped the current situation of lantern art characterized by "form innovation and core pressure".

5.1.1.1 Craftsman Dimension: Mismatch Between Willingness and Mechanism

Veteran craftsmen represented by masters Huang Jiamao and Li Nanchang generally hold a strong willingness to pass on their skills, regarding lanterns as a carrier of family and community honor. However, the inheritance mechanism is highly dependent on the "pre-festival intensive training" model.



Figure 29 Lanterns Made in a Concentrated Manner for the Snake Lantern of Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

For example, the production of Snake Lanterns in Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township, usually only starts one month before the New Year. Young participants can only engage in terminal processes such as pasting paper and coloring, lacking systematic learning of key knowledge such as core bamboo strip selection, frame making, and node binding. This rhythm of "intensive investment and hasty conclusion" leads to periodic fractures in the craftsmanship inheritance chain, characterized by "enthusiastic sentiment but insufficient practical engagement".

5.1.1.2 Community Dimension: Coexistence of Cohesion and Alienation

Undoubtedly, Shicheng lantern activities serve as a powerful community cohesive agent during festivals. During the parade of Banqiao Lanterns in Mulan Township, the route of "assembly at the ancestral hall - response along streets and lanes - gala performance at the square" clearly replicates the traditional community spatial order and ethical relations, awakening villagers' deep sense of belonging. However, this cohesion is highly time-bound. After festivals, as young migrant workers leave their

hometowns and tourists disperse, the community returns to normal, and the strong relational network woven by lanterns quickly loosens. As villager Yang Yuanyu noted in an interview: "The liveliness is like a gust of wind—once it passes, it's gone. It's too hard to find a reason to gather everyone to make or talk about lanterns in daily life." This reveals the dilemma of transforming community participation from "festival carnival" to "daily practice".

5.1.1.3 Institutional Dimension: Gap Between "Window Display" and "Platform Construction"

As cultural inheritance institutions in modern society, museums and schools have actively intervened. The display of Dragon Lantern models in Shicheng County Museum and "Lantern Making for the First Day of School" activities carried out in some schools have provided cognitive access for the public, especially young people. However, such involvement is mostly characterized by "fragmentation" and "projectization".



Figure 30 Only picture introductions are available for the lantern art exhibits in the museum

Source: Photographed by the Author

Museum exhibitions focus on finished products, making it difficult to convey the complete process logic from bamboo strips to light effects; school courses are mostly one-time experiences, lacking a gradient design of "introduction - advancement - mastery". As Lai Weiming, a museum staff member, stated: "We have opened the window, but we haven't built the stairs for people to walk in and go deeper." Currently, the function of institutions remains at the level of a "display window" and has not been transformed into a sustainable "inheritance platform".

5.1.1.4 Policy Dimension: Imbalance Between Branding and Foundation Building

The Shicheng County Government has explicitly promoted the branding and tourism integration of lantern art in its "14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development", tilting resources towards performances at Tongtianzhai Scenic Area and large-scale cultural festivals, which has rapidly enhanced the visibility of "Shicheng Lantern Art". However, policy dividends have not evenly permeated the foundation of inheritance. There is insufficient support for the daily operation of grassroots workshops, the systematic digital collation of process archives, and the substantive incentives for inheritors to train apprentices in the long term. This resource allocation that "values stage performances over behind-the-scenes craftsmanship" has created cultural hotspots in the short term but may hollow out the connotation of craftsmanship in the long run, leading to the risk of "brand emptiness".

5.1.2 Comprehensive Impacts of Changes on Local Social Culture

The changes triggered by the aforementioned transformations of Shicheng Lantern Art have exerted profound and complex impacts on the local society of Shicheng County.

5.1.2.1 Craftsmanship Ecology: "Traditional Core" Surviving Under Innovation Pressure

Currently, the greatest challenge facing the craftsmanship ecology of Shicheng Lantern Art lies in balancing "visual innovation" and "craftsmanship preservation". To attract tourists and young audiences, some new works tend to use brighter chemical pigments and more complex LED lighting effects. However, as

veteran craftsman Li Nanchang worries: "The strength and proportion of the lantern frame are the soul. Making it merely flashy will cause it to fall apart in a gust of wind."



Figure 31 The Body Section of the Banqiao Lantern in Mulan Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

The research finds that core crafts that best reflect traditional wisdom, such as the elastic treatment of bamboo strips and wind-resistant joint structures, are at risk of degradation due to insufficient training. Therefore, the key to craftsmanship inheritance is not to reject all changes, but to ensure that any innovation is built on a solid foundation of traditional craftsmanship.

5.1.2.2 Local Economy: Difficulty in Converting "Traffic Peaks" into "Sustained Income"

Shicheng Lantern Art has created significant economic "attention peaks". During the New Year and Lantern Festival, the income of catering, accommodation, and handicraft stalls around core performance areas surges—especially the number of

orders for hand-made lanterns in this one month exceeds that of the entire year (see Figure 12).

However, this economic effect is pulsed. After festivals, related consumption almost returns to zero, and lantern workshops become deserted. A deeper problem is the opaque distribution mechanism of tourism benefits: grassroots craftsmen and community organizations often fail to fully share the dividends brought by branding, which weakens their intrinsic motivation for sustained investment. Therefore, opening up channels for converting "festival traffic" into "daily consumption" and establishing a fair benefit-sharing mechanism are crucial for the economic sustainability of lantern art.

5.1.2.3 Community Governance: Elevation from "Cultural Custom" to "Governance Resource"

This study finds that lantern activities in Shicheng County have transcended their cultural essence and evolved into a "rehearsal field" and "adhesive" for community governance. Organizing a large-scale Snake Lantern parade requires effective collaboration among multiple stakeholders: the council (traditional authority), village committee (government administrative organization), volunteers (community activists), cultural and tourism department (professional institution), and public security and fire departments (safety guarantee).



Figure 32 Residents' Committee of Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

This collaborative process has invisibly fostered the community's capabilities in negotiation, division of responsibilities, resource coordination, and emergency response. As Deng Song mentioned in an interview: "Through organizing lantern activities, people of different surnames, cadres, and villagers in the village have learned how to sit down to discuss matters and get things done." This indicates that lantern art is activating and nurturing a new type of community social capital and governance capacity based on cultural identity.

5.1.2.4 The Multiple Impacts of Social Participation and the Construction of Collaborative Networks

This study finds that lantern activities in Shicheng County have transcended their cultural essence and evolved into a "rehearsal field" and "adhesive" for community governance.

① Emotional and Psychological Impacts on Community Residents

Sense of Pride and Honor: As a core local symbol, the honors that Shicheng lanterns have garnered on China Central Television (In 2022, Shicheng lantern art was featured in the hit programs *Taste·Shicheng* and *Celebrating the New Year in Farmyards* on China Central Television) have greatly boosted the local people's cultural confidence and sense of pride, with villagers regarding their village's lantern troupe as a carrier of community honor. The process of participating in lantern-making, lantern-dancing, and lantern-preserving is a physical practice of identity affirmation. Particularly during festive collective activities, the strong sense of presence and shared responsibility deepen community members' sense of belonging.

② Cooperative Relationship Composed of Multiple Subjects

Collaborative Network: A multi-agent collaborative network has been formed, characterized by "overall coordination by the Lantern Art Council — administrative support by village committees and township governments — mastery of core craftsmanship by inheritors and craftsmen — educational inheritance by schools and museums — extensive participation by volunteers and villagers — publicity and

promotion by cultural and tourism departments and county converged media — safety guarantee by public security and fire departments".

Evolving from blood-based spontaneous collaboration to bridging collaboration involving weak ties such as tourists and returning young people, this network has ultimately moved toward an institutionalized public collaborative network. Gathered around lantern activities, this collaborative network has tempered the community's capabilities in deliberation, division of labor, implementation and emergency response in practice.

③ Influence and promotion on the government

Policy Formulation: the community cohesion and cultural influence of lantern art have prompted the government to incorporate it into core cultural policies (such as Implementation Opinions and the "14th Five-Year Plan"), taking it as a key starting point for cultural and tourism integration, rural revitalization, and urban brand building. **Intangible Cultural Heritage Application and Protection:** the foundation of living community inheritance has provided important support for the successful application for national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. Subsequent protection measures (general survey, research, and introduction into campus) have been continuously improved through the interaction between community practice and government policies.

Improvement of Governance Capacity: organizing large-scale lantern activities has become a "rehearsal venue" for the government to exercise cross-departmental cooperation, public activity management, and community mobilization capabilities, enhancing the efficiency of grassroots governance.

5.1.3 Evolution of Cultural Identity and Community Relations

From 2007 to 2024, the cultural identity of Shicheng Lantern Art has undergone an evolution: from inward-focused identity centered on "families and villages", to outward-extended identity covering "localities and regions", and then to multi-layered overlapping identity featuring "branding and governance-oriented attributes". Meanwhile, community relations have developed from "spontaneous

collaboration" relying on clan ties, to "bridging collaboration" integrating weak ties such as tourists and returning young people, and gradually moved towards an institutionalized and regularized "public collaboration network". This process shows that lantern art is not only a festival symbol but also a cultural practice through which the community reweaves social relations and builds a governance community.

5.1.3.1 Cultural Identity: From "Layered Endogeneity" to "Nested Expression"

In the early stage (2007-2012), identity was firmly embedded in families and villages—lanterns were "our Zhuolong Village's lanterns" or "our Li Clan's lanterns". With the influx of media and tourists (2013-2018), identity began to spill outward, and lanterns became a "feature of Shicheng". In the recent period (2019-2024), driven by policies, identity has formed a complex "nested" structure: in the ancestral hall, it remains a symbol of family blood; in Douyin short videos, it is an eye-catching "Internet-famous" attraction; in government work reports, it is a brand card for "cultural and tourism integration".



Figure 33 Exterior and Interior of Jiangdong Temple of Zhuolong Village

Source: Photographed by the Author

Individuals can freely switch and superimpose these identity layers in different contexts. This "nested identity" demonstrates the survival resilience of local culture in the context of globalization—it does not reject the attachment of new meanings, but the traditional core has not been simply replaced.

5.1.3.2 Community Relations: From "Blood Ties" to "Event Co-creation"

Correspondingly, the community relational network has undergone a fundamental expansion. It has evolved from spontaneous mobilization mainly relying on clan "strong ties" to project-based collaboration integrating "weak ties" such as tourists, returning young people, and cross-border artists. Eventually, in the most institutionalized stage in recent years, a regularized "co-creation network" based on "lantern affairs" has initially emerged. Stakeholders from diverse backgrounds have formed new collaborative habits and trust relationships through jointly completing a series of events such as "making, displaying, protecting, and narrating lanterns". Lantern art has become a "social needle", stitching increasingly atomized community members back into a flexible and functional relational network.

5.2 Discussion of Results

This study not only conducts an in-depth investigation into Shicheng Lantern Culture but also provides new empirical insights in relevant theoretical fields, while expanding and deepening existing research.

5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes potential contributions to related theories in the following aspects:

5.2.1.1 Enriching the Application of Social Identity Theory in Local Culture and ICH Research

Against the backdrop of increasing globalization and mobility, this study reveals how local cultural identity can be constructed and maintained in a flexible "hierarchical superposition" rather than "either-or" manner through specific practices such as lantern art. It emphasizes the fundamental role of "bodily practice" (physical engagement) in generating deep-seated identity compared to "symbolic consumption",

providing a new analytical perspective for understanding contemporary people's sense of local belonging.

5.2.1.2 Expanding Functionalism's Explanation of the Contemporary Value of Folk Activities

The research confirms that traditional folk activities in contemporary society can not only fulfill classic functions such as cultural inheritance and psychological comfort but also derive new functions including promoting community governance, driving economic development, and integrating social resources. Through the Shicheng case, this study specifically demonstrates how cultural practices can achieve creative transformation from "traditional relics" to "contemporary resources" through functional adaptation and expansion.

5.2.2 Expansions and Deepenings of Existing Lantern Art Research

5.2.2.1 Proposing a Community Relationship Analysis Framework of the "Event Turn Mechanism".

Most existing studies focus on the symbolic significance and craftsmanship characteristics of lantern art, while few systematically analyze its process mechanism as a carrier for community governance. By tracking the transformation of Shicheng lantern activities from "festival mobilization" to "normalized collaboration", this study reveals how the coupling of "space-personnel-training" gives rise to new community interaction scenarios, and how resource negotiation and the distribution of rights and responsibilities construct governance capabilities in practice. This framework provides a dynamic perspective for understanding the role of traditional festivals in contemporary community governance.

5.2.2.2 Constructing a "Hierarchical Superposition" Model of Cultural Identity

This study points out that the cultural identity of Shicheng Lantern Art is not a simple linear replacement from "traditional" to "modern", but rather overlaps and coexists at multiple levels such as family, village, locality, and region, and is selectively activated in different contexts.



Figure 34 Private Ancestral Halls in Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

This breaks through the limitations of the "identity replacement theory" and provides a new approach to explaining the identity resilience of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) amid the tension between globalization and localization.

5.2.2.3 Deepening the Phased Analysis of the Interactive Relationship Between "Craftsmanship-Community-Policy"

This study divides the period from 2007 to 2024 into three phases: "Continuity Maintenance Period (2007–2012)", "Activation and Spillover Period (2013–2018)", and "Governance and Branding Period (2019–2024)", systematically revealing the dominant forces and core characteristics driving changes in each phase. Compared with previous studies that mostly focus on a single time period or a single factor, this diachronic analysis presents the evolutionary logic of the interaction between lantern art and society more comprehensively.

5.2.2.4 Revealing the Structural Contradiction Between "Festival Peak" and "Daily Foundation"

The study clearly identifies that the current inheritance crisis of lantern art stems from the disconnect between "intensive investment in festival-oriented activities" and "daily foundational support". Whether it is the livelihood of craftsmen, community participation, or the allocation of policy resources, all present a cycle of "prosperity during festivals and desolation afterward". This finding serves as a warning for the common problem of "valuing one-off activities over long-term normalization" in ICH protection practices.

5.3 Prospects for Future Research

The future of Shicheng Lantern Art should not merely involve protecting an endangered tradition, but nurturing a dynamic cultural ecosystem. This "new lantern ecosystem" is rooted in profound traditional craftsmanship, driven by continuous innovative design, and oriented toward broad social sharing and value transformation, ultimately achieving the harmonious unification of cultural inheritance and community development.

5.3.1 Constructing an Institutionalized Community for Cultural Inheritance and Education

A significant portion of the inheritance crisis stems from the informal, emotion- and bloodline-driven family model. Upgrading to a formal, institutionally guaranteed inheritance and education community can effectively address this issue.

5.3.1.1 Deep Integration into the Education System

It is recommended to establish "Lantern Craftsmanship and Local Culture" as a comprehensive practical course, systematically integrating it into the curriculum systems of primary and secondary schools in Shicheng County and even vocational colleges in southern Jiangxi. Beyond simple handicraft training, the curriculum design should integrate interdisciplinary knowledge such as fine arts (structure and light, color and form) and history (local social changes, oral history and

narratives), forming a systematic local teaching model. The goal is to cultivate a new generation of inheritors with both practical skills and cultural understanding.

5.3.1.2 Establishing a Grid Layout of Research and Training Centers

Set up the "Shicheng County Lantern Craftsmanship Research and Training Center" in the county seat, and establish "inheritance workshops" in key towns (e.g., Dayou Township, Mulan Township) and communities, forming a grid layout of "central radiation and workshop implementation". These spaces will receive basic operational support from the government but be co-managed by senior inheritors, emerging designers, and community volunteers.



Figure 35 Shicheng County Convergence Media Center is interviewing the host of the Snake Lantern performance.

Source: Photographed by the Author

They will serve not only as pre-festival intensive training venues but also as year-round open studios, community clubs, and micro-creation spaces, making craftsmanship practice an integral part of daily life.

5.3.1.3 Talent Echelon Building and Incentives for Innovation

Establish a county-level certification system for "Lantern Craftsmanship Inheritors", with supporting hierarchical subsidies and inheritance grants that link economic rewards to apprentice training outcomes. Meanwhile, set up a "Youth Lantern Innovation Fund" to support young craftsmen and designers in exploring and experimenting with materials, forms, functions, and cross-border applications while upholding core craftsmanship—providing an environment, resources, and recognition for innovation.

5.3.2 Exploring Paths for the Modern Transformation and Design Intervention of Lantern Art

Future research can specifically investigate how to transform the craftsmanship elements, aesthetic symbols, and narrative traditions of lanterns into modern product designs, public art, digital media content, and experiential tourism projects. Special attention should be paid to balancing "design-driven" and "community-led" approaches to avoid craftsmanship hollowing-out and cultural alienation caused by innovation.

For example, Jingdezhen City in Jiangxi Province has implemented highly valuable initiatives for the revival of traditional ceramic art:

Relying on Jingdezhen Ceramic University and various ceramic art training workshops, it has built a complete education chain covering basic education to professional research, and from craftsmanship inheritance to design innovation.

By creating spaces such as the Taoxichuan Cultural and Creative Block and the Sculpture Porcelain Factory Creative Market, it integrates creation, exhibition, sales, and experience, forming an agglomeration effect. These spaces are not only trading venues but also platforms for young creators to interact with the public and for brand incubation.



Figure 36 Taoxichuan Cultural and Creative Block and Sculpture Ceramic Factory
Creative Market in Jingdezhen

Source: Photographed by the Author

Jingdezhen ceramics have actively engaged in cross-border cooperation with fields such as clothing, home furnishing, architecture, and digital media, launching co-branded products, art installations, and immersive exhibitions that expand the application scenarios and aesthetic expressions of ceramics.

5.3.3 Promoting Cross-Border Symbiosis and Community Empowerment of Lantern Art

The case of lantern art as a carrier for community governance demonstrates that ICH inheritance can be closely integrated with grassroots public affairs. Lantern art

should serve as a catalyst connecting different fields and stimulating the endogenous motivation of communities.

5.3.3.1 Lanterns and Community Building

Encourage inheritance workshops to actively organize public activities such as community forums, story-sharing sessions, and elderly birthday celebrations, turning them into emotional bonds and public spaces for the community. Promote the "Hundred Families Lantern Project", encouraging community residents to actively participate in making lanterns with their own characteristics and stories, thereby achieving community co-construction—where each household's participation collectively forms a community public art piece.



Figure 37 Lanterns at the doorsteps of villagers

Source: Photographed by the Author

5.3.3.2 Lanterns and Rural Revitalization

Systematically integrate lantern elements into rural tourism planning. Develop lantern-themed homestays (with small workshops on-site), lantern-featured farm banquets (with themed tableware and decorations), and rural light art festivals. Meanwhile, combine lantern weaving and paper-pasting techniques with local traditional industries such as bamboo weaving and papermaking to form a small handicraft industrial chain, enabling villagers to increase their income through culture without leaving their hometowns.

5.3.3.3 Lanterns and Urban Branding

Elevate lanterns to become Shicheng's "super cultural symbol". Integrate lantern shapes, colors, or light imagery into the urban signage system, public transportation, street furniture, and visual identities of major events. Regularly host high-level "Lantern Art Festivals" to attract artists and designers from across the province and the country for creation and dialogue, transforming Shicheng from a "hometown of lanterns" into a "national node for lantern art exchange".

5.3.4 Constructing Digital Archives and Communication Platforms

Leverage digital technology to protect and promote Shicheng Lantern Culture, telling the contemporary story of Shicheng lanterns to the world.

5.3.4.1 Digital Archives and Knowledge Bases

Systematically conduct high-definition video recording, 3D modeling, and digital archiving of oral histories for lantern artists, craftsmanship processes, classic patterns, and historical allusions across the county. Establish an open-to-the-public "Shicheng Digital Lantern Museum" and a professional knowledge database. Utilize digital platforms (e.g., online museums, virtual experience courses) to expand inheritance and communication channels. Meanwhile, research how digital communication influences the construction and expression of local community culture.

5.3.4.2 Promoting International Exchange and Copyright Development

Actively cooperate with domestic and foreign design schools, art galleries, and cultural institutions, inviting outstanding designers for residency programs and joint exhibition projects. Explore the authorized development of core cultural IPs

related to lanterns, allowing Shicheng lanterns to reach a broader young audience through new media forms such as animation, games, and film and television.

5.4 Conclusions

Different from the uniform, stable, and cool-toned light of modern lights, traditional Shicheng lanterns use candles or oil lamps, emitting warm, flickering light with a sense of vitality. The combination of the texture of bamboo strip frameworks and semi-translucent oiled paper allows light to seep out from the inside, outlining the shape and structure of the lanterns. It embodies the perfect unity of bamboo's toughness and paper's delicacy, as well as the integration of restrained light and external modeling, which is the aesthetic crystallization of Shicheng's bamboo-paper craftsmanship.

The charm of Shicheng lantern art lies not only in static lanterns, but also in the "river of light" formed by hundreds of lanterns winding forward in the dark night (such as Snake Lantern and Banqiao Lantern). This collective, dynamic, and rhythmic array of light and shadow is its most shocking visual symbol, symbolizing the unity and vitality of the community.

When people see a lantern team made of bamboo strips, glowing with warm light and dancing in a unique formation, even without written explanations, they can intuitively feel that this is a living culture originating from China's agricultural tradition and with distinctive Hakka regional characteristics. The uniqueness of Shicheng lies in pushing this universal lantern imagery to an extreme through its unique bamboo strip craftsmanship, large-scale cooperation involving hundreds of people, and rich formation culture, thus making it an irreplaceable local cultural calling card.



Figure 38 The Performance of the Snake Lantern in Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author

The evolution of Shicheng Lantern Art from 2007 to 2024 is a microhistory of how local festival customs adapt to social transformation and reconstruct community connections. It demonstrates that the vitality of intangible cultural heritage lies not only in the survival of its craftsmanship but also in its ability to be embedded in the daily life, social relations, and governance structures of contemporary people. Currently, Shicheng Lantern Art stands at a crossroads between "branded development" and "connotative inheritance". Only by consolidating the foundation of daily training with

policy support, ensuring the fair participation of multiple stakeholders in community collaboration, upholding the core of craftsmanship in innovative transformation, and building a complete learning path for intergenerational transmission can the light of lanterns transcend the festival night sky and continue to illuminate the future of the community.

If there were no lanterns in Shicheng, the community would lose its warm pulse. The winding light and shadow in front of the ancestral halls, and the joyful bustle of collaboration in the streets and alleys would fall silent; the regional identity would fade accordingly, like the night sky missing its brightest star. That unique aesthetic dialect, woven by the interplay of bamboo, paper and candlelight, would be swallowed by the homogenized glow of modernity.

If there were no lanterns in China, the Lantern Festival would lose its soul, and the vibrant scenes of its nights would fade into an echo of the past forever. Once this shared emotional grammar that has linked the refined and the popular cultures across northern and southern China vanishes, the scroll of national festivals would lose its warmest hue.

Therefore, the flickering candlelight of Shicheng lanterns is living history and a ritual of reunion. It is not a static object, but a symbiotic creation that takes light as its brush and the community as its canvas. To safeguard this faint light is to safeguard a kind of existential wisdom—one that affirms the self through collaboration and lights the way for each other through inheritance.

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APPENDIX



APPENDIX A

Interview questions (craftsman)

1. How many years have you been engaged in the production of Shicheng lanterns?
2. What are the main inheritance methods of the core craftsmanship you have mastered (such as frame binding, paper-cutting and appliqué, etc.)?
3. In what aspects do Shicheng lanterns differ significantly from those produced in other regions?
4. Do you think that traditional materials for making lanterns (such as moso bamboo and rice paper) have been replaced by alternative materials?
5. What is the changing trend of the number of lantern manufacturing orders in the past five years?
6. What is your opinion on the willingness of young people to learn the craft of making Shicheng lanterns?
7. What do you think are the main factors hindering the inheritance of lantern-making craftsmanship?
8. Are you willing to teach the lantern-making craftsmanship to teenagers in the community?
9. Are you satisfied with the effect of the current government policies on the protection of this craftsmanship?
10. What suggestions do you have for the sustainable development of Shicheng lanterns?

Interview questions (Villagers and Tourists)

1. Have you ever participated in the traditional lantern festivals of Shicheng (such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival lantern shows)?
2. What do you think of the role of lantern activities in enhancing community cohesion?
3. Are you aware of the special implied meanings of Shicheng lantern patterns (e.g., the "Ganlong Lantern" symbolizes good weather for crops)?
4. What is your opinion on the effect of lantern activities in boosting the local tourism economy?
5. If you have participated in lantern activities, what was your main motivation?
6. Are you willing to support your children in learning lantern-making craftsmanship?
7. What do you think of the sense of identity towards lantern culture among the younger generation?
8. Are there any practical factors that have prevented you from participating in lantern activities?
9. Are you satisfied with the current efforts of the government in protecting and promoting lantern culture?
10. What suggestions do you have for increasing the participation of villagers and tourists?

Interview questions (Museum staff)

1. Does the museum hold long-term special exhibitions on Shicheng lanterns?
2. How effective is the museum's exhibition in presenting the lantern-making process of "framework binding, paper pasting, pattern painting, and lantern lighting"?
3. What is the level of visitors' interactive interest in the lantern exhibition (e.g., taking photos, asking questions, etc.)?
4. How interested are visitors in the exhibition area featuring the connection between "lanterns and the Hakka migration history"?
5. Has the museum systematically documented the oral history of lantern-making artisans

regarding the craft?

6. What is the status of the museum's cooperation with schools in developing lantern-themed courses?
7. How satisfied are you with the special government funds earmarked for intangible cultural heritage protection?
8. What do you think are the shortcomings of the museum's current conservation efforts (e.g., level of digitalization, youth education, communication capacity)?
9. What do you consider the main obstacles to cross-regional exhibitions (e.g., transportation, cultural barriers, funding)?
10. What suggestions do you have for enhancing the educational function of lantern exhibitions?

Interview questions (Government staff)

1. Which policies related to lantern protection have you participated in formulating?
2. Do you know which level of the intangible cultural heritage protection system Shicheng lanterns have been included in?
3. What was the approximate proportion of the 2024 intangible cultural heritage protection funds allocated to the lantern project?
4. What do you think of the organizational capacity of Shicheng County Bureau of Culture and Tourism for lantern activities?
5. Which aspect accounts for the largest share of the special funds for lanterns?
6. What are the difficulties in implementing the policies related to lantern protection and development?
7. What cultural protection measures are in place for investment promotion under the "lantern-tourism integration" model?
8. What is your assessment of the feasibility of establishing a lantern cultural and ecological protection zone?

9. What are your suggestions for prioritizing the protection directions of Shicheng lanterns?
10. What is the core positioning of Shicheng lantern culture in the five-year plan for the future?





APPENDIX B

1. Survey Photos of Shicheng Lantern Art Museum



Figure 1 The author is at the entrance of the Lantern Art Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 2 Exterior of the Lantern Art Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 3 Interior of the Lantern Art Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 4 Pole Dragon Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 5 Dragon Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 6 Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 7 Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 8 Qilin Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 9 Phoenix Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 10 Lion Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 11 Tea Basket Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 12 Clam Shell Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 13 Boat Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 14 Bench Dragon Lantern, Eight Immortals Lantern, Copper Coin Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 15 Carp Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 16 Lotus Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 17 Bamboo pole Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 18 Horse Lantern, Twelve Chinese zodiac signs Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author

2. Survey Photos of Shicheng Museum



Figure 1 Exterior of the Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 2 Topographic Map of Shicheng Area

Source: Photographed by the Author



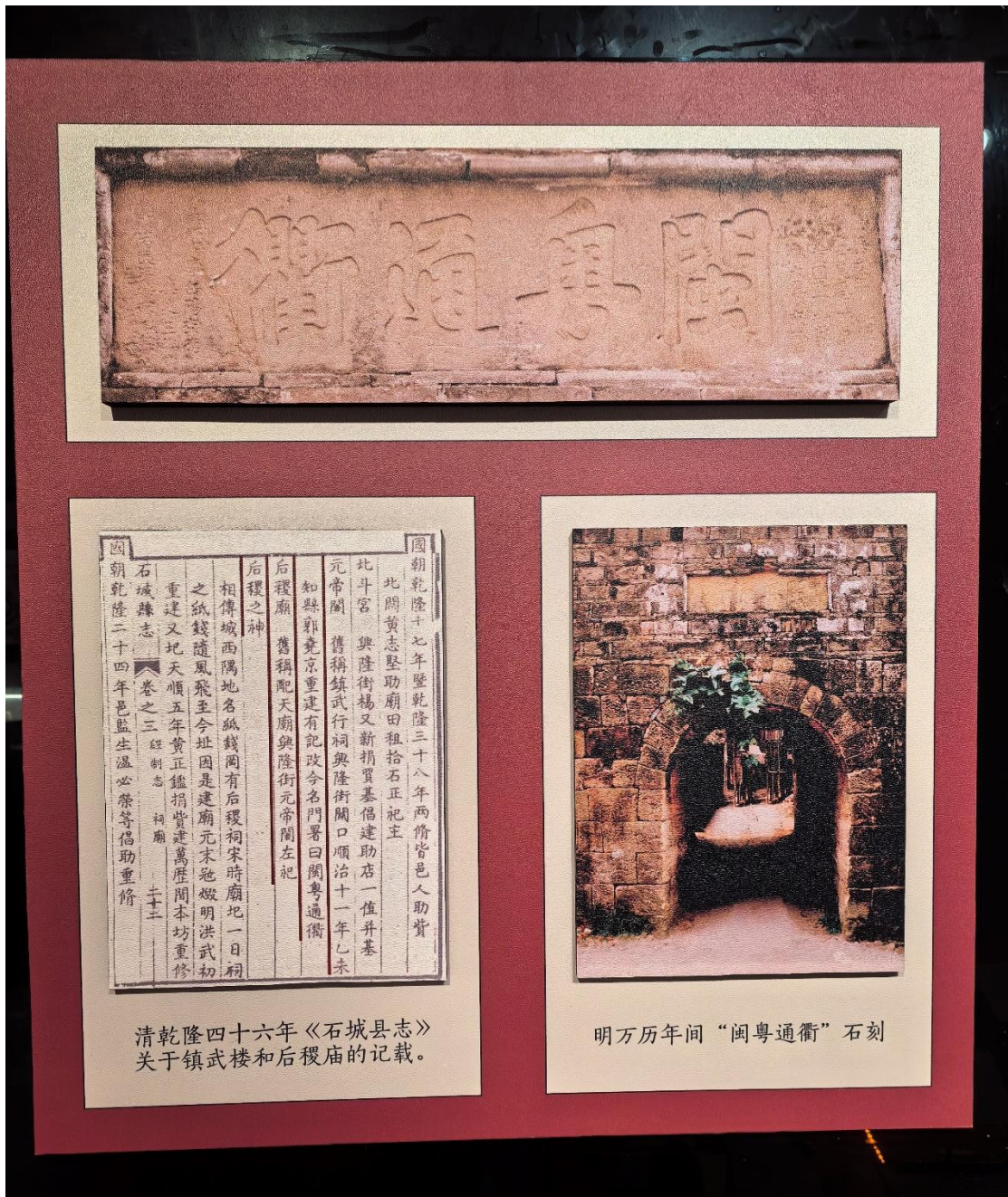
Figure 3 Map of the Five Southern Migration Routes of the Hakka Ancestors

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 4 Stone Tablet Restoration in Shicheng

Source: Photographed by the Author



清乾隆四十六年《石城县志》关于镇武楼和后稷庙的记载。

明万历年间“闽粤通衢”石刻

Figure 5 Shicheng serves as an important gateway connecting Fujian and Guangdong

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 6 Display Model of Dragon Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author

3.Survey Photos of Township Interviews



Figure 1 Interview with Artisan Liao Chengyuan from Mulan Township

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 2 Interview with Artisan Li Nanchang from Mulan Township

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 3 Traditional Lantern Style in Mulan Township

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 4 Connecting Tools for the Body Part of Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 4 The Chicken Head Part of Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 5 The Chicken Tail Part of Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 6 Villagers are lighting the lanterns

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 7 Villagers are pasting paper onto the lantern frames

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 8 Villagers are handwriting blessing messages on the lanterns

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 9 Villagers are gathering at the government of Mulan Township to assemble Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 10 Overhead View of Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 11 The Luminous Symbolism of Banqiao Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 12 Artisans from Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township are rushing to make lanterns for the snake lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 13 The Entrance to Zhuolong Village, Dayou Township

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 14 The head of the Snake Lantern is waiting to be received at the Yang Clan Ancestral Hall.

Source: Photographed by the Author

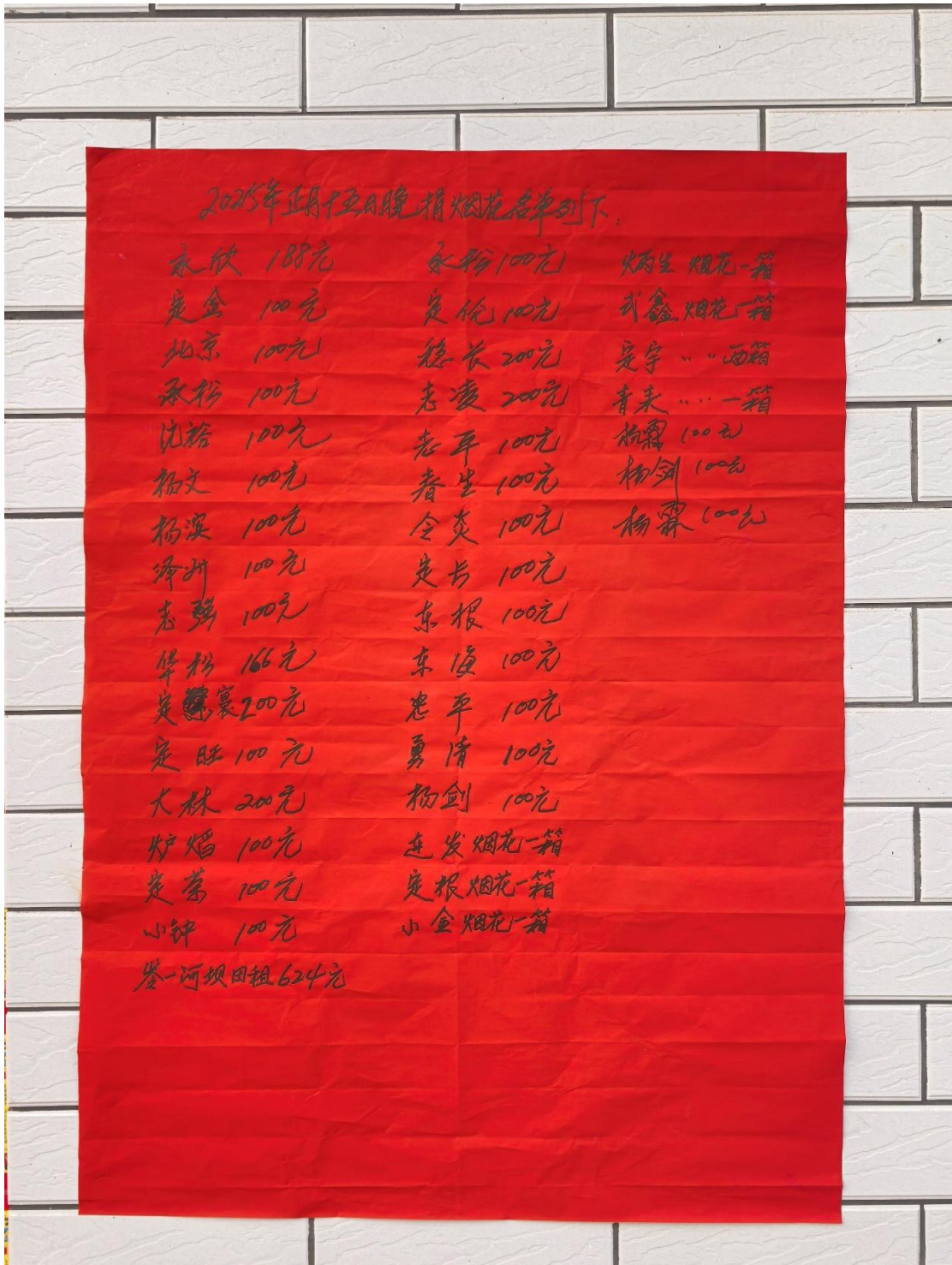


Figure 15 Donation List for the Fireworks Display

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 16 Villagers are arranging and setting off fireworks in front of the Yang Clan Ancestral Hall.

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 17 Zeng Clan Ancestral Hall in Zhuolong Village

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 18 Propaganda Board for the Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 19 Villagers are selling lantern crafts

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 20 The Scene at the Entrance of Jiangdong Temple

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 21 The Interior Scene of Jiangdong Temple

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 22 Donation List for the Construction of Jiangdong Temple

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 23 Villagers are on their way to the snake lantern performance

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 24 Villagers all offer sacrifices to their ancestors at home

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 25 The Snake Lantern is circling around the square of Jiangdong Temple

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 26 Detailed Photos of the Snake Lantern Performance

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 27 The Pattern Decorations and Blessing Inscriptions on the Snake Lantern

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 28 Traffic police and government staff are maintaining order along the route of the snake lantern parade.

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 29 Fireworks were set off all along the way

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 30 Invite the deities of Jiangdong Temple out and place them at the final performance venue.

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 31 The villagers' band is waiting with traditional musical instruments

Source: Photographed by the Author



Figure 32 The snake lantern procession arrives at the final performance venue after the parade

Source: Photographed by the Author

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