

# Folk Sports of the Hakkas in The West of Fujian

## Research on the Oral History of "Tianchuan Pageant"

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**Abstract**—“Tianchuan Pageant” is an iconic local culture in the village of Getian, Liancheng County, west of Fujian. It has been inherited for 353 years. It is a reflection of the Hakka's cultural choice and historical restoration. It is Hakka sustenance and an important activity of psychological comfort and faith. Through oral history, literature review methods, etc., the research was studied on the "Tianchuan Pageant" of the villagers' sports in Liancheng. The study found that "Tianchuan Pageant" is a folk sports activity in the Hakka villages of the west of Fujian for sacrificial offering including five parts of inviting God, inspection tour, performance of martial arts, the village feast and banquet, and sending God. The oral memory of the origin of the Tianchuan Pageant is an important way to understand its historical development at this stage. The choice of Tianchuan Pageant's modern heritage and development path should be a self-improvement process of diversification.

**Keywords**—Hakka; folk sports; Tianchuan Pageant; inheritance; development

### I. INTRODUCTION

Hakka culture has the reputation of “the living fossil of the ancient culture of the Central Plains”. As a part of the Hakka culture, “Tianchuan Pageant” is the crystallization of the wisdom of the Huang Clan in Getian Village of Liancheng, and it is the epitome of the typical Hakka culture. The western boundary of the Wuyi Mountains and the Bopling Mountains is located in the subtropical region. The pristine mountains of the primeval forests make the Hakka's tenacious and indomitable character, and also create a primitive and exploreable folk sports culture on this land. Using the oral history method to excavate and organize the "Tianchuan Pageant" of the villagers' traditional sports culture in the west of Fujian, it has great practical and theoretical significance for the protection and inheritance of the Hakka culture and the harmonious development of folk sports.

Oral history is a method of internationally writing history. It originated in the United States in the middle of the 20th century. It is a method of collecting and using oral historical materials to study history. It was introduced to China in the 1980s, and it has been widely used in the field of humanities and social sciences. It has also received much attention from the sports academic community, especially in the field of folk sports culture. Oral history not only makes up for the

lack of historical materials, enriches the research connotation, but also is of great significance in transforming the research paradigm and broadens the scope of the study. This thesis attempts to conduct a case study on the "Tianchuan Pageant" of the villagers' traditional sports culture in Liancheng, based on the relevant theories and research methods of oral history, trying to use the method of oral record to do some historical document records for "Tianchuan Pageant" and giving some recommendations for the inheritance and protection of the “Tianchuan Pageant”.

### II. RESEARCH OBJECT

This research takes the folk sports "Tianchuan Pageant" in Getian village, Liancheng County in Fujian Province as the research object.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

#### A. Literature Review Method

Using this method, it is needed to check the relevant literatures such as local chronicles, county records, genealogy and local government work reports, and obtain relevant literature through the Chinese journal network and Wanfang full-text journal network.

#### B. Oral History Method

On the basis of a large amount of literature, this method need people to formulate project plans, identify interviewees, draw up interview outlines, and conduct interviews. In the literature and related experts, it was finally determined that the Liancheng boxing descendants of the Getian Village, Huang Zhaoqi (92), Huang Shouchang (76), and the 23rd generation of the inheritor Huang Lin (48) were the subjects of oral history. It was drafted as a common version and a personalized version. The interview time was conducted in February 2016-2018.

#### C. Field Investigation Method

- During the February 2016 event: the records on progress of the “Tianchuan Pageant” ceremony, interviews with organizers, participants, foreign visitors, guests and villagers.

- During the inactivity period in August 2016: In-depth interviews with Huang Zhaoyu, Huang Shouchang and Huang Lin.
- During the February 2017 event: interviews with performers, inheritors, village heads and experts, and personally participated in Liancheng boxing learning and organization and performance activities; during the whole period, follow-up observations and records.
- Answering the suspected part of the investigation in March 2018. During the four field investigations, a large number of text materials related to the study were collected, more than 1,000 photographs were taken, more than six hours of recordings were recorded, and more than 400 minutes of interviews were recorded.

#### IV. ORIGINAL CULTURE OF "TIANCHUAN PAGEANT"

The former village of Getian Village, formerly known as Nantian Village, is also known as the Gekou Field. The land area is about 13.73 square kilometers. It is located 4 kilometers west of Liancheng County and belongs to the town of Gechuan. The village is built on the mountain, with 5 natural villages under its jurisdiction, 626 households, nearly 3,000 people. The village of Getian is a typical Hakka clan village. The whole village is dominated by Huang's Hakkas, and the village's Huang surname accounts for more than 90% of the total population. According to the "Liancheng Nantian Huang's Genealogy"<sup>1</sup>, the village has more than 800 years of history, and the villagers are very simple. The site selection of the village is mainly characterized by the Hakka migration clan culture. At present, there are 2 large ancestral temples in the village and 11 small ancestral temples. The early tribes took the ancestral hall as the center of life. Here, the ancestors worshiped a lot, almost all of them enshrined their ancestral tablets; the characteristics of the pluralism of the faith are also very significant. There are 7 temples in the village, such as Guangyuan Temple, Tongziyan Ancient Temple, Baolong Temple, etc., which are enshrined in the gods and bodhisattvas of different "functions"; as a Hakka village, the village of Getian also gave birth to a unique Hakka folk culture product in the process of its long clan reproduction - "Tianchuan Pageant", which not only exhibited Hakka folk rituals and special body memory - Liancheng boxing, more fully show the unyielding personality of the Hakka group.

#### V. THE ORIGIN OF "TIANCHUAN PAGEANT" AND ITS CEREMONY PROGRESS

##### A. The History Origin of "Tianchuan Pageant"

Talking about "Tianchuan wins the meeting" must first say "Tianchuan Festival." About "Tianchuan Festival", the earliest record was in the "Shiyi Ji" (a supernatural story novel)<sup>2</sup> written by Wang Jia in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. There is a record: "Jiangdong commonly known as the first day of the 20th is the day of Tianchuan, with red glutinous pancakes on the house to make up the hole of sky. According to legend, this is also the day Nv'wa made up the sky hole. "The historical data show that there are differences in the time, content and title of "Tianchuan Festival" in different regions, such as filling the sky, stopping the sky leak, hunger day, and filling the heavens and the earth, but the time is concentrated around the 20th of the first lunar month, right in the moment of Rain Water of the 24 solar terms. Under the circumstance of science in ancient times, the ancestors felt the virginity in the "Tianchuan Festival", and also looked forward to a psychological comfort of the weather and the glory of everything. Different ethnic groups in different regions have different differences in the title of "Tianchuan Festival" and festival customs, but they all originate from the legend of the story of Nv'wa making up the sky hole, to develop a folk custom<sup>3</sup>.

The "Tianchuan Pageant" in Getian village, Liancheng County is a folk sports activity developed on the basis of the Hakka traditional festival "Tianchuan Festival". Although the villagers of the title of "Tianchuan Pageant" have spoken in various circles, the overall expression of "Tianchuan Pageant" expresses people's expectations for a better life. Huang Zhaoxuan said that after the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, they changed "sheng" (盛) to "sheng" (胜). ... "Tianchuan" represents the meaning of prosperity and endless life" and so on. As mentioned above, the "Tianchuan Festival" in each place will be different in form and date. The "Tianchuan Pageant" in the field is in front of the world in its unique performance. In the case of the village, the Tianyue Village has designated the 15th day of the first lunar month as the "Tianchuan Pageant". Huang Shouchang said: "In the neighboring village of Luofang, they hold the temple fair on the 15th of the first lunar month: telling stories, and worshiping Guan Gong. Lin Fang's temple fair is on 13th of the first lunar month: dragon touring..... My village clan in the neighboring village on the temple day, are all going to visit the neighboring villages to visit the friends, the neighboring village Yuanxiao Temple Fair has ended, especially on the 20th of the first month is the 20th Sichuan Temple Fair, to thank them for the temple period Hospitality."

1) "Tianchuan Pageant" and Liancheng Boxing: a traditional folk sports activity: Regarding the origin of Liancheng Boxing, according to Huang Linshu, Huang Zhangsheng in the village of Huangtiansheng went to

<sup>1</sup> "Liancheng Nantian Huang's Genealogy": "Since Shaogong settled down in Nantian for more than eight hundred years, there have been more than thirty generations with hundreds of thousand people to support the vassal states. These people migrated to the neighbor villages, gathering most in Tongxian Village in Hangzhou, and the regions of the South of Fujian, the East of Guangdong, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and countries in Southern Asia."

<sup>2</sup> Gu Zhong, Shiyi Ji [J] Reading, 1983 (6): 57 - 58.

<sup>3</sup> Chang Jianhua. New Saying of Chinese Ancient Festivals - Renri, Tianchuan, Tiancang, etc. [J] Folklore Studies, 1999 (2): 64 - 73.

Shaolin Temple in the north to learn Kungfu, and returned to teach the boxing to the tribe. The whole ethnic group took the responsibility of strengthening the body and protecting the home. Therefore, Huang Zhangsheng was also honored as the "original ancestor" of the martial arts in the field. During the reign of Shunzhi in the Qing Dynasty, Huang Sihuan, the 13th-century ancestor of Huang Clan, had learned the essence of his home-passing boxing. During his business in Zhejiang, he met with the inner boxer Huang Baijia and his master Wang Zhengnan. After two years of careful guidance, his Kungfu refined. Subsequently, Huang Sihuan combined the essence of each boxing method to create Huang's Liancheng Boxing. In 1665, he founded the "Xingwu Club" and stipulated that the "Tianchuan Day" Huang Clan of the 20th day of the first lunar month of the year gathered in the ancestral hall to discuss martial arts for the purpose of reviewing Liancheng Boxing. Since then, "Tianchuan Day" has been creatively transformed into a ceremonial folk sports activity that combines the ritual of the gods and the martial arts performances – "Tianchuan Pageant". "Tianchuan Pageant" and Liancheng Boxing have been integrated into the long history and provided a platform for the inheritance and development of Liancheng Boxing.

#### B. Interpretation of the Ceremony Process

Through in-depth interviews and participatory surveys of the inheritors, organizers, and performers, the oral history materials were analyzed and analyzed. The traditional ritual process of Liancheng County's "Tianchuan Pageant" included: inviting God — inspection tour — performance of martial arts — village feast and banquet — sending God.

1) *Inviting God*: On the 19th day of the first month of lunar calendar, the Huang Clan of the "Tianchuan Pageant" Council, selected by the "Tianchuan Pageant" Council of the Getian Village, is responsible for the worship of the Gods, usually by the prestigious mayor or the predecessor holds the light, and the lighter is generally the oldest man in the clan, with the noble character, and both the children and grandchildren, and leading some men to go to the Tongziyan Temple to worship the "Grain Immortals", to sacrifice (chicken, fish, pork, rice wine) in the incense case to worship "Grain Immortals" with prepared incense burner, dragon flag, bunting, burning incense, steamed bread, toast, setting off firecrackers and burning firecrackers. After that, the two people will send the "Grain Immortals" out of the temple to the sedan chair, and then "Grain Immortals" will be invited to the Zhilianggong Ancestral Hall. In recent years, with the changes in social structure and concepts, the number of people to invite gods has been reduced compared with the previous ones, and even the use of cars to transport the "Grain Immortals" and the sedan chair to the ancestral hall down the mountain.

2) *Inspection tour*: At 8 o'clock in the morning of the 20th day of the first lunar month, the encirclement team was

ready. The Huang clan worshipped the "Grain Immortals" and the ancestors in the Ancestral Hall to set off firecrackers. The elders invited out the "Grain Immortals" and began the inspection tour. The route departs from the Zhilianggong Ancestral Hall in the whole circle of the whole village, and sets off firecrackers at the two main intersections in the village to worship the "Grain Immortals", and then around the 1st circle (the main road along the Getian Village does not include the surrounding natural village). The main area of the village of Getian); the way to the ancestral hall after the entrance to the ancestral hall to worship the ancestors again, and then returned to the Zhilianggong Ancestral Hall around three laps finally into the ancestral hall. The entire team was headed by the chairman of the "Tianchuan Pageant" board of directors, with the light following the gun carrier, the golden gong and drum, the "Grain Immortals", the Chiba umbrella, the dragon flag, the house flag, the festival plaque, the army drum march, flower shed of each house, and finally the gun carrier, the inspection tour team consists of nearly 100 people. Everywhere where the "Grain Immortals" went, they will sing a scent to welcome the "Grain Immortals", and also drop chicken blood at their doorsteps to express their exorcism. Around the time of 11 o'clock, they returned to the ancestral hall, and once again enshrined the "Grain Immortals" in the ancestral hall. Then the inspection tour part will be over. In the past two years, the encircling route has changed. When interviewing Huang Zhimin, the president of the "Tianchuan Pageant" council, he said: "The original route of the inspection tour of the original route is around the big village, 1 circle around the main road, 1 small circle. Around the temple, other routes cannot be fixed according to the situation. In the past few years, it has not been like this year. There is no way that some people in the village will say that they will not travel to us. Do you despise us? The villagers are willing to welcome bodhisattva and come to their door, so they circled more this year..."

3) *Performance of martial arts*: When the encirclement team will return to the "Grain Immortals" after returning to ancestral hall, they will enter the stage of performance of martial arts. The location is located in the old stage of the village. With the sound of firecrackers, the whole village gathers in front of the crowd. As the drums sound, the Hakka Lions welcome the lions from all the houses and places, and the lions will be the team invited to the stage, and then the opening of the prestige, after the village chief speech, the official martial arts show began, and finally the Hakka Lions sent guests. In the past three years, with the improvement of living standards, the donation from the village and the donation of the economically affluent, a well-equipped new stage was set up in front of the old stage. The performance was not only displayed by the villagers, but also from Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and other places came to the stage to perform.

4) *Village feast and banquet*: After the performance of martial arts, the villagers will prepare wines in their homes and banquets for the daughters and relatives of the back and forth, including 1-2 tables at least and 5-6 tables at most. Guests at the door will also be able to set off the custom of firecrackers in front of the door. In recent years, under the background of the "intangible cultural heritage" policy, the influence of "Tianchuan Pageant" has increased, and invited and attracted guests from all walks of life. As a result, the larger village banquet came into being. The village banquet outsourced the local catering team under the sponsorship of enterprises and individuals, and set up 7-8 tables in the open space outside the ancestral hall to show the hospitality of the Hakka people and also play a positive role in promoting the development of local culture.

5) *Sending God*: On the morning of the 21st of the first month, the patriarchs will coordinate and arrange for the tribes to worship the "Grain Immortals" and then go out to the temple, and then send them back to the Tongziyan Ancient Temple for worship, which symbolizes the successful conclusion of "Tianchuan Pageant". Before the "Grain Immortals" was sent back to the Tongziyan Ancient Temple, the ancestral hall was full of excitement. The whole village's devout men and women went to the ancestral temple to burn the fragrant rituals to the "Grain Immortals", praying for a bumper harvest and a prosperous family.

## VI. "TIANCHUAN PAGEANT" MODERN INHERITANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PATH CHOICE

### A. Increasing Government Support

The inheritance and development of folk sports cannot be separated from the support of local government departments. First of all, it should be established a sound cultural inheritance method and form a protection mechanism; it must be implemented of the specific implementation steps and measures for traditional culture to enter the campus; strengthen the propaganda and promotion of investment, and continuously expand its influence; second, the inheritance of the government in the "Tianchuan Pageant" In the development, it plays the role of "coordinator" and insists on "people-oriented", so that the soul of culture and the cultural material carrier develop synergistically, creating a healthy and active atmosphere for the development of folk sports. Paying attention to the construction of folk sports development system it should be fully heard from public opinion, encouraging cultural inheritance subjects to actively participate in it, and ensuring the scientific and practical nature of the folk sports protection mechanism. It should be given full play to the government's credibility and make it truly a boost to the development of folk sports.

### B. Improving the Inheritance System and Enhancing National Cultural Identity

It should be accelerated of the improvement of the family-style and apprenticeship-style inheritance model, and develop the tradition of oral communication as a "national

fitness" style; combined with the media of modern new media, increase the "going out" efforts and attract more "Outsiders" actively "walk in" to learn and understand this characteristic Hakka culture, which not only enhances the identity of ethnic culture, but also meets the modern people's pursuit of fitness and entertainment, inherits in entertainment, and recognizes in inheritance.

### C. Accelerating Cooperation with Schools and Accelerating the Process of Inheritance and Development

Inheriting and protecting the "Tianchuan Pageant", a Hakka folk sport, not only requires the government's policy support, but also needs to cooperate with scientific research institutions such as universities, make full use of scientific research advantages, give recommendations on the inheritance and protection of Hakka culture and ecological environment, and take measures to better speed up the inheritance and protection. At the same time, it promotes the cultivation of folklore inheritance subjects, makes full use of school resources to regard local traditional culture as a kind of school education content, cultivates the cultural identity of young people and self-confidence to local traditional culture, and strengthens the identity of the inheritors to local culture, promoting the inheritance and the development of folk sports.

### D. Enhancing the Cultural Brand Benefits and Developing the Folk Culture Industry

The development of the folk activities of "Tianchuan Pageant" needs to develop and innovate, rationally develop on the basis of non-destructive excavation, promote the marketization of "Tianchuan Pageant"; and continuously improve the social awareness of "Tianchuan Pageant" through the operation of the market, create a distinctive Hakka brand, attract the attention of social forces, and constantly explore the cultural connotation of "Tianchuan Pageant"; it should also make full use of the joint efforts of the government and social forces, increase promotion and publicity, enhance the brand level of folk culture; and promote "Tianchuan Pageant" as soon as possible. The development of the industry, in cooperation with other Hakka characteristic folk culture projects, planning Hakka characteristics "ecological folk sports culture circle", and in the festival activities, cultural and art festivals, economic and trade activities and tourism, etc., extensively open up and expand the market to form "self-hematopoietic" protection mechanism.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The "Tianchuan Pageant" folk sports activities in the village of Getian, Liancheng County, western Fujian, are the collective memory and spiritual ties of the Hakka family in the west of Fujian. They have specific historical and practical significance for uniting and continuing the ethnic group. Investigating oral memory is an important way to understand the historical origins and legends of the origin of Tianchuan Pageant. For the inheritance and development of the future "Tianchuan Pageant", it should be chosen to increase the cooperation between the "Tianchuan Pageant" and the government, social forces, and schools; improve the



inheritance system, enhance the national cultural identity; enhance the cultural brand benefits, and develop the folk culture industry in diversified inheritance and development process.

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