



# The Influence of Red-Headed Boats on the Identity of Chaoshan People

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**Abstract.** This study, which traces the historical roots of the red-headed boat, explores its origins in the Qing Dynasty and its significant role in the maritime trade between the Chaoshan region and Southeast Asia. Delving into how the red-headed boat, which has become a vital cultural symbol, reflects the adventurous spirit, perseverance, and unity of the Chaoshan people, the study provides a comprehensive analysis. Through in-depth interviews with individuals from different generations, the study examines the ways in which the red-headed boat influences the collective memory, cultural pride, and identity of the Chaoshan community. The findings, which suggest that the actual use of these boats has faded, indicate that their symbolic significance continues to impact modern Chaoshan society, particularly with regard to cultural inheritance and community cohesion. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of preserving this cultural symbol through education, family traditions, and community activities. Despite focusing on a specific cultural artifact, the research, which opens avenues for further exploration into the broader cultural identity of the Chaoshan people, also considers the role of other cultural symbols in this process.

**Keywords:** Chaoshan Culture, Red-Headed Boat, Cultural Identity, Historical Memory, Cultural Symbols

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The Red Boat, also known as the Red Head Boat, has become one of the important symbols of the traditional culture of the Chaoshan region. The boat first appeared during the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty and was mainly used for cross-sea trade and immigration, facilitating economic and cultural exchanges between the Chaoshan region and Southeast Asian countries [1]; [2]; [12]. The Red Boat is not only a means of transportation, but also a symbol of the adventurous spirit, perseverance and hometown feelings of the Chaoshan people. This is because, for most Chaoshan people, the Red Boat carries their historical memory and cultural identity [3]; [13], representing a cultural symbol of the Chaoshan region and a significant part of

the cultural heritage of the Chaoshan hometown for overseas Chinese. The core values of this spirit include adventurous spirit, solidarity and mutual assistance, and honesty and trustworthiness, reflecting the unique spiritual outlook of the Chaoshan people [4]; [14]. Therefore, The Red Boat is a significant cultural symbol of the Chaoshan region, embodying its history, spirit, and heritage.

The Chaoshan region is a distinct cultural area known for its unique language, customs, and traditions, with the Red-Headed Boat playing a significant role. The boat not only witnessed the migration history of the Chaoshan people but also became a part of their identity. Through the Red-Headed Boat, the Chaoshan people expanded their geographic footprint and strengthened their cultural ties with other Chinese communities. [5]; [15].

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore how the Red-Headed boat affects the identity of the Chaoshan people. Through historical documents, oral history and field research, this study analyzes the symbolic meaning of the Red-Headed boat in Chaoshan culture and how it shapes the cultural identity of the Chaoshan people.

By exploring these issues, this study aims to reveal the significant role of the Red-Headed Boat in Chaoshan culture and clarify how this symbol continues to influence the identity of the Chaoshan people in modern society. Additionally, this study seeks to provide a new perspective on the role of cultural symbols in the process of identity formation.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The study explores the following questions: How does the Red-Headed Boat, as a cultural symbol, affect the identity of the Chaoshan people? How is the historical memory of the Red-Headed Boat inherited and reconstructed among the Chaoshan people? What role does the Red-Headed Boat play in modern Chaoshan culture?

# **2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

## **2.1 Historical and cultural background of Red-Headed boats**

The origins of the Red-Headed Boats can be traced back to a decree issued by the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty in 1684, which reopened the Chinese coastline to maritime activities. Previously, China had imposed strict restrictions on private overseas trade since the Ming Dynasty. Kangxi's decree ended these restrictions and initiated the recovery of the southern coastal areas, which had suffered severe damage during the long war between Manchu invaders and the merchant-pirate Zheng Cheng-gong. The recovery process in the Chaoshan area, one of the regions most affected by the conflict, officially began later during the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor, marked by the first wave of immigrants to Siam (now Thailand).

The Chaoshan Red-Headed Boats were initially led by Chua Ngang, a native of Chengyanggang, Chenghai County. Chua Ngang utilized Siam's abundant hardwood resources to build several ocean-going cargo ships, known as Yang ships. Since ship-building was expensive in China, Chua Ngang attracted many merchants by promising not to charge any fees in the event of an accident within three years. This strategy not only allowed Chua Ngang to amass a fortune but also enabled the Chaoshan merchant community to build nearly a hundred merchant ships and establish a strong foothold in Siam.

The Red-Headed Boats adopted a design used in coastal grain transport vessels since the Southern Song Dynasty and were constructed to maximize cargo and passenger space while ensuring stability in open waters. Primarily made of hardwoods, such as ironwood, these boats had an advantage in collisions with Fujianese vessels, which were typically built from softwoods.

Despite the strict regulations imposed by the Qing government on ship construction, builders of Red-Headed Boats relied on oral instructions and expertise passed down through generations. In 1723, Emperor Yongzheng issued new regulations requiring ships from different provinces to paint their bows in specific colors for customs inspection and tax collection. Since Guangdong Province was assigned the color red, Chaoshan's foreign ships in Guangdong became known as Red-Headed Boats.

The Red-Headed Boats became a crucial component of South China Sea trade in the late 18th century, transporting a wide variety of goods, including sugar produced in Chaoshan, cotton from the north, textiles from Guangzhou, Su wood from Cambodia, rice from Siam, seafood from the Riau Islands, pepper from Baling, tin from Bangka, gold from West Borneo, opium from Bengal, and migrant laborers from Chaoshan. By sailing between the major production centers in Southeast Asia, the Red-Headed Boats established themselves as an essential part of the regional trade network.

Not only did the Red-Headed Boats promote the economic recovery of the Chaoshan region, but they also became a cultural symbol of the courage and solidarity of the Chaoshan people. They formed an extensive trade network in the late 18th century and played a crucial role in the prosperity of Southeast Asian cities such as Bangkok, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Johor Bahru, and Pontianak. However, with the advent of steamships in the 1850s, Chaoshan merchants quickly adapted to the new technology, and the Red-Headed Boats gradually faded from the stage of history ([1]; [2]).

Despite this, the spirit of the Red-Headed Boat continues to be celebrated in the Chaoshan area, symbolizing the people's resilience and perseverance in overcoming difficulties. As a result, the Red-Headed Boat remains both a symbol of Chaoshan's economic development and a vital part of its cultural heritage.

## 2.2 Identity and Cultural Symbols of Chaoshan People

Identity is a crucial marker of an individual as a member of society, as different identities are often associated with specific rights, obligations, responsibilities, allegiances, recognition, and rules of conduct [6]; [16]. Identity, a collective phenomenon encompassing group consciousness, is the most basic, profound, and enduring marker.

This collective identity shapes how individuals perceive themselves and their place within society, since Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that people tend to categorize themselves and others into distinct social groups [7]; [17].

Group membership in these social categories, a source of self-esteem, provides individuals with a sense of belonging and a defined position within the social environment. This sense of belonging reinforces their connection to the group and shapes their perception of social roles, because an individual's social identity affects their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others. ([8], [9], [18], [19]). For instance, A person may have different social identities, such as gender, race, age and occupation.

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping identity. Immigrants constantly navigate and reflect on their sense of self between their homeland and their new environment, asking questions like: Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? This is a complex process of adaptation and practice, involving the delicate transformation of both new and old identities. Through this ongoing integration, immigrants blend their old and new identities into a cohesive community, forming new symbolic patterns of connection and belonging [11], [20], [21]. Culture contributes to this process by enabling immigrants to maintain contact with their hometown through language, customs, traditions, and other practices while adapting to their new environment.

The Chaoshan people are one of the three major ethnic groups of the Han nationality in Guangdong. In modern times, a significant number of Chaoshan people immigrated overseas, particularly to Southeast Asia, where they became an integral part of the overseas Chinese community. Among the Southeast Asian countries, Siam (now Thailand) has the largest Chinese population, with many native Chinese--most of whom are from Chaoshan--totaling in the millions [10], [22].

The identity of the Chaoshan people reflects the diversity and complexity of cultural symbols. Language, as an important carrier of the Chaoshan people's identity, is embodied in the Chaoshan dialect, which carries rich cultural connotations and serves as a key manifestation of their group consciousness and identity.

Secondly, the customs and traditions of the Chaoshan people also play a significant role in shaping their identity. For example, the unique food culture, traditional festivals, wedding customs, and funerals of the Chaoshan people are all concrete manifestations of their cultural identity. These customs and traditions are preserved and passed down in Chaoshan, as well as continued and carried forward in overseas Chinese communities.

In addition, religious beliefs and clan organizations are also important components of the Chaoshan people's identity. They generally believe in Buddhism, Taoism, and ancestor worship, which play a crucial role in maintaining cohesion and a sense of identity within the Chaoshan community. These religious practices serve as a foundation for community rituals and traditions, as clan organizations strengthen the connection and sense of identity among Chaoshan people through activities such as ancestor worship and clan gatherings.

In summary, the identity of the Chaoshan people is shaped by a complex process influenced by various cultural symbols. Through language, customs, traditions, religious beliefs, and clan organizations, the Chaoshan people have developed a unique cultural identity through continuous adaptation and practice. Not only does this identi-

ty help them maintain their connection with their homeland, but it also enables them to better integrate into new environments and form new symbolic patterns of connection and belonging.

### **2.3 The Specific Impact of the Red-Headed Boat on the Identity of the Chaoshan People**

The Red-Headed Boat is a unique cultural symbol of the Chaoshan region, representing the spirit of bravery, hard work, unity, and mutual assistance of the Chaoshan people. As a symbol of historical significance, the Red-Headed Boat is both an important part of the collective memory of the Chaoshan people and a crucial carrier of their identity.

The history of the Red-Headed Boat can be traced back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, when Chaoshan merchants used these boats as the primary means of maritime trade. Researchers have noted that in the Chaoshan area, there is a deep sense of ancestry, and the status of men in Chaoshan society is highly valued [3], [23]. They shoulder the responsibility of the family, the role of sons within the clan hall, and broader social obligations, making the Red-Headed Boat both a symbol of the economic activities of Chaoshan merchants and a vital part of the collective memory of the Chaoshan people. Preserving the stories and history of the Red-Headed Boat helps the Chaoshan people maintain cultural continuity and identity across different times and environments.

As a cultural symbol, the Red-Headed boat has greatly enhanced the cohesion of the Chaoshan community. Researchers [5], [24] pointed out that the promotion of the Chaoshan cultural spirit is conducive to the enthusiasm of overseas Chinese to build their hometown, and it is easy to arouse the recognition of Chaoshan culture among the "new Chaoshan people" who come from other places to settle, work and live in Chaoshan. The Red-Headed Boat symbolizes the unity, cooperation, and collective struggle of the Chaoshan people. This spirit has been passed down through generations, becoming a vital force for the cohesion of the Chaoshan community. In the overseas Chinese community, the symbolic significance of the Red-Headed Boat is particularly prominent, prompting them to maintain close ties and a strong group identity in foreign lands.

The Red-Headed boat is not only a symbol of the economic activities of Chaoshan merchants, but also an important source of their cultural pride. Researchers believe that the cultural identity of the Red-Headed boat merchants is one of the important reasons for their unity and cooperation [4], [25]. The Red-Headed Boat represents the diligence, wisdom, and adventurous spirit of the Chaoshan people—qualities that are widely recognized and celebrated under this symbol. Through the symbol of the Red-Headed Boat, the Chaoshan people have not only achieved economic success but also gained cultural pride. This sense of pride further strengthens their identity, enabling them to maintain a deep connection to their cultural heritage and homeland in the context of globalization.

The history and stories of the Red-Headed Boat are repeatedly mentioned and celebrated in sacrificial activities and clan gatherings in the Chaoshan area, which serve

not only as a display of culture but also as a reinforcement of identity. Through the oral histories passed down by the older generation of Chaoshan people, we can see the significant role the Red-Headed Boat holds in their lives and memories. The Red-Headed Boat is not only a witness to their personal experiences but also an integral part of their collective memory, providing strong evidence of its profound influence as a cultural symbol on the identity of the Chaoshan people.

In summary, as a unique cultural symbol of the Chaoshan region, the Red-Headed Boat has profoundly influenced the identity of the Chaoshan people through the preservation of historical memory, the strengthening of community cohesion, and the promotion of cultural pride. Through field research and oral history materials, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of this process and further appreciate the important role of the Red-Headed Boat in the cultural identity of the Chaoshan people.

### **3 Research Methodology**

To explore the impact of Red-Headed boats on the identity of Chaoshan people, this study adopts a qualitative research method, mainly collecting data through in-depth interviews. The specific research methods are as follows:

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study aims to understand the specific impact of the Red-Headed Boat on the identity of the Chaoshan people, focusing on historical memory, cultural symbolism, and community cohesion. To achieve this, the study selected a representative sample of Chaoshan people as interview subjects, including members of the older generation who experienced the history of the Red-Headed Boat, as well as middle-aged and younger Chaoshan people. A sample size of 10 participants was chosen to ensure both diversity and representativeness.

#### **3.2 Interview Question Design**

The interview questions revolved around the following topics:

##### **Personal experience and connection with the Red-Headed boat.**

- Please tell us about your or your family's stories or experiences with the Red Head Boat.
- What place does the Red Head Boat occupy in your memory?

##### **Red-headed boats and identity.**

- What do you think is the importance of the Red-Headed boat to Chaoshan culture.

- How does the red-head boat influence your identification with your Chaoshan identity?

### **The significance of Red-Headed boats in modern society.**

- What role do you think the red-head boat plays in the Chaoshan community today?
- Does the red-head boat culture have an impact on the younger generation? If so, what is the impact?

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and in-depth, with each session lasting 30-60 minutes. Telephone or video interviews were also used when appropriate. With the interviewee's consent, the interviews were recorded, and important notes were taken.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

First, the recordings were transcribed into text, and preliminary open coding identified the main themes and patterns. Then, systematic thematic analysis determined the key influencing factors and manifestations of the Red-Headed Boat on the identity of the Chaoshan people. Finally, feedback from some interviewees confirmed the preliminary analysis results, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Before the interview, the research purpose, process, and confidentiality measures were explained to the interviewees, and written or oral informed consent was obtained. The data report anonymized all personal information to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

The research design enables us to gain a deeper understanding of how the cultural symbol of the Red-Headed Boat affects the identity of the Chaoshan people and provides valuable empirical data for related cultural research.

### **3.6 Interview Process and Record**

Table 1 provides demographic details of the interviewees, including their age, gender, and professional identity. The respondents are a mix of media professionals, state-owned enterprise employees, master's degree candidates, and freelance entrepreneurs, ranging in age from 25 to 43 years.

**Table 1.** Basic Information of the Interviewees.

<b>Respondents</b>	age	gender	identity
Interviewee 01	39	male	Media Person

Interviewee 02	32	female	State-owned enterprise employees
Interviewee 03	25	male	Master's degree candidate
Interviewee 04	43	male	Freelance Entrepreneur
Interviewee 05	39	female	Media Person
Interviewee 06	32	female	State-owned enterprise employees
Interviewee 07	39	male	Media Person
Interviewee 08	32	female	State-owned enterprise employees
Interviewee 09	25	male	Master's degree candidate
Interviewee 10	43	male	Freelance Entrepreneur

## 4 Result

### 4.1 Personal Experience and the Connection with the Red-Headed Boat

All interviewees mentioned that their family history is closely connected to the Red-Headed boat, whether through personal experience, listening to stories from elders, or through the experiences of certain family members, the Red-Headed boat occupies an important position in their family history. For example, interviewee 01 mentioned: "My ancestors in the family were engaged in the Red-Headed boat trade, and this trade activity supported the family's livelihood." This historical connection is not only a personal experience, but also a part of Chaoshan culture. Most interviewees were exposed to the culture and history of the Red-Headed boat since childhood, and these early contacts had a profound impact on their cognition and identity. Interviewee 04 recalled: "I listened to my grandmother's stories about the Red-Headed boat since I was a child, and there were relatives in my family who went to Thailand to do business via the Red-Headed boat. These experiences made the Red-Headed boat have special significance in my growth process."

The specific experiences and ways of exposure of the interviewees were different. For example, interviewee 02 learned about Red-Headed boats through specific historical events in his family. He said, "An elder in my family went to Thailand by Red-Headed boat and shared these experiences, which strengthened my understanding of Red-Headed boats." Interviewee 03 became interested in Red-Headed boats through the stone tablets and geographical locations near his home. He mentioned, "There is a stone tablet with 'Zhanglin Ancient Port' engraved on it near my home, which increased my interest in Red-Headed boats." In addition, some interviewees' families are close to the Red-Headed boat port, and their understanding of Red-Headed boats is more intuitive and profound.

Respondent 07 learned about the story of the Red-Headed boat through word of mouth from the previous generation and through public channels such as television. Her grandfather, as an education and cultural worker in Chenghai, often mentioned the Red-Headed boat when teaching local history and doing text editing. Respondent 08 learned about the Red-Headed boat from family stories. Her grandmother told about the experience of family members crossing the ocean, which made the Red-Headed boat important in her growth process. Respondent 09 grew up in the Cha-



oshan area and learned about the history of the Red-Headed boat through the ancient port in her hometown, but did not mention the specific stories of her family. Respondent 10 first heard about the history and stories of the Red-Headed boat through the oral narration of the elders in her family.

## 4.2 Red-headed Boats and Identity

All respondents believe that the Red-Headed boat is an important symbol of Chaoshan culture, representing the adventurous spirit, perseverance, and spirit of unity and cooperation of the Chaoshan people. Respondent 01 pointed out: "The Red-Headed boat represents the adventurous spirit and perseverance of the Chaoshan people, which are an important part of the Chaoshan people's identity." This cultural symbol not only enhances the Chaoshan people's sense of pride, but also strengthens their sense of group identity. Respondent 03 said: "The Red-Headed boat gives the Chaoshan people a high sense of pride, allowing them to proudly say that they are from the hometown of the Red-Headed boat when negotiating business."

Different interviewees have different understandings of the Red-Headed boat spirit. Some interviewees emphasize the spirit of adventure, such as interviewee 02 who said: "The Red-Headed boat represents the adventurous spirit of Chaoshan people and the courage to explore the unknown world. These qualities have had a profound impact on my growth." Some interviewees value the spirit of unity and cooperation. The cultural identity of the Red-Headed boat also varies between generations and regions. The older generation pays more attention to historical memory and traditional culture. For example, interviewee 04 emphasized: "The Red-Headed boat is not only a symbol of Chaoshan people leaving their hometown and breaking into a new world, but also represents the spread of Chaoshan culture around the world." The younger generation may pay more attention to the symbol of the Red-Headed boat in modern culture.

Respondent 07 believes that the Red-Headed boat has an important influence on the identity of Chaoshan people, and has become a symbol of Chaoshan IP like Guangji Bridge and Li Ka-shing. Respondent 08 feels proud and grateful. The spirit of the Red-Headed boat made her understand that going out and paying would always pay off. Respondent 09 said that the Red-Headed boat deepened his identification with his Chaoshan identity. The Red-Headed boat always reminds him of the fighting spirit related to marine civilization in the spiritual heritage of Chaoshan people and the courage to make a living in a foreign country. Respondent 10 is proud of being a Chaoshan person and the spirit of the Red-Headed boat, and said that the spirit of the Red-Headed boat runs through and supports his entire entrepreneurial experience.

## 4.3 The Significance of Red-Headed Boats in Modern Society

All respondents believed that the Red-Headed boat still has an important influence in modern society, especially in terms of cultural inheritance and education. Respondent 01 believes that: "Although the actual use of the Red-Headed boat as a means of transportation has ended, its symbolic significance still exists and is continued through the revival of traditional culture." The Red-Headed boat culture not only

strengthens the connection between the Chaoshan people and other Chinese communities, but also promotes the continuation of cultural identity. Respondent 02 pointed out: "The inheritance of the Red-Headed boat culture helps to strengthen the group cohesion of the Chaoshan people and pass it on to the next generation through education and stories."

Different interviewees have different views on the specific ways in which Red-Headed boats have an impact in modern society. Some interviewees believe that it is through cultural activities and education, such as interviewee 04 who said: "In modern society, Red-Headed boats still have an impact on the identity of Chaoshan people. For example, Red-Headed boats are displayed in Chaoshan cultural museums, Chaoshan restaurants and Chaoshan specialty stores in various places." Others believe that it is through business and community activities, such as interviewee 03 who pointed out: "Red-headed boats still have an influence in the Chaoshan community, especially in cross-border e-commerce and overseas Chinese communities. This cultural connection strengthens the connection and identity of Chaoshan people with other Chinese groups."

Respondent 07 mentioned that the Red-Headed boat is not often mentioned in daily life, but it is of great significance when sharing Chaoshan culture among friends. Respondent 08 believes that the influence of the Red-Headed boat in modern Chaoshan culture is becoming more and more obvious, especially in the "Red-Headed boat" trend set off by overseas Chinese returning home after the epidemic. Respondent 09 mentioned the appeal of the Red-Headed boat culture to the younger generation, and believed that the red-headed boat culture should be inherited and developed through the filming of documentaries and movies, and the encouragement of more literary creation and academic research. Respondent 10 emphasized the importance of the Red-Headed boat spirit in the inheritance of Chaoshan culture, and believed that the achievements of Chaoshan people in most Southeast Asian countries not only rely on intelligence and timing, but more importantly, the support of the Red-Headed boat spirit.

#### **4.4 Specific Impact and Inheritance Methods**

All respondents believe that the inheritance of the Red-Headed boat culture is very important, especially in families and communities. Respondent 02 mentioned: "By telling the stories and folk songs of the Red-Headed boat, the younger generation can understand and inherit this cultural spirit." Most respondents believe that the Red-Headed boat culture can be effectively inherited through education and community activities. Respondent 04 suggested: "Incorporate elements of the Red-Headed boat culture into local kindergartens and school education, and promote and spread the Red-Headed boat culture through groups such as the Chaoshan Chamber of Commerce and hometown associations."

Respondent 07 believes that the future inheritance and development of the Red-Headed boat culture should be spread through anthropomorphism, IP and social marketing, using the discourse system of modern people. Respondent 08 suggested that the government should strengthen the planning and construction of Red-Headed boat

parks to make the Red-Headed boat culture more intuitive. Respondent 09 believes that by telling the stories and folk songs of the Red-Headed boat, the younger generation can understand and inherit this cultural spirit. Respondent 10 did not specifically mention the specific impact and inheritance of the Red-Headed boat in modern society, but he believes that the inheritance of the Red-Headed boat spirit in families and communities is very important.

#### **4.5 Summary of Relevant Viewpoints**

By analyzing the similarities and differences of the interviewees, it can be seen that the Red-Headed boat plays an important role in the identity and cultural heritage of the Chaoshan people. The Red-Headed boat is not only a part of Chaoshan history, but also an important symbol of Chaoshan culture, representing the adventurous spirit, perseverance and spirit of unity and cooperation of the Chaoshan people. This cultural symbol is deeply rooted in the identity of the Chaoshan people through being passed down from generation to generation. The inheritance of the Red-Headed boat culture is still of great significance in modern society. Through education, family inheritance and community activities, this cultural spirit can be effectively passed on to the next generation. Specific ways of inheritance can include integrating Red-Headed boat culture into school curriculum, displaying the history of Red-Headed boats through community activities and museums, and strengthening cultural identity through chambers of commerce and hometown associations. Although the actual use of Red-Headed boats as a means of transportation has ended, its symbolic significance still plays an important role in modern society. The Red-Headed boat culture has important value in enhancing the pride of the Chaoshan people, promoting cultural inheritance and strengthening community cohesion. This cultural connection is not only effective within the Chaoshan area, but also has a far-reaching impact on the global Chinese community.

## **5 Conclusions and Discussion**

### **5.1 Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study show that the Red-Headed Boat plays a vital role in the identity of the Chaoshan people. It is not only a part of Chaoshan history and culture but also a symbol of the Chaoshan people's adventurous spirit, perseverance, solidarity, and cooperation. This symbol is passed on and carried forward through family inheritance, oral history, and community activities, deeply rooting itself in the identity of the Chaoshan people.

By analyzing the interviewees' responses, this study reveals the specific impact of the Red-Headed Boat as a cultural symbol on the identity of the Chaoshan people. It not only represents the adventurous spirit, perseverance, and unity of the Chaoshan people but also plays a crucial role in enhancing their sense of pride and group identity. The historical memory of the Red-Headed Boat has been preserved and reconstructed through family inheritance, oral history, and community activities. The inter-

viewees mentioned that they had heard stories about the Red-Headed Boat from their elders since childhood, and through the transmission within families and communities, the historical memory of the Red-Headed Boat has been passed down through generations.

This study also found that the Red-Headed Boat continues to play an important role in modern Chaoshan culture. Although its use as a means of transportation has ended, its symbolic significance remains influential in contemporary society. The Red-Headed Boat culture holds great value in enhancing the pride of the Chaoshan people, promoting cultural heritage, and strengthening community cohesion. Through an in-depth interview study of Red-Headed Boat culture, this research addresses how it affects the identity of the Chaoshan people. As a significant cultural symbol, the Red-Headed Boat has profoundly shaped the cultural identity of the Chaoshan people through the preservation of historical memory and its enduring influence in modern society. The study shows that the Red-Headed Boat is not only a witness to history but also an integral part of modern Chaoshan culture, continuing to influence the identity and cultural pride of the Chaoshan people as it is passed down through generations.

## **5.2 Study Limitations and Future Research Directions**

### **Study Limitations.**

This study mainly collected data through in-depth interviews, but there is still a problem of small sample size. The backgrounds of the respondents are mainly concentrated in specific regions and age groups, which may not fully represent the views of all Chaoshan people. For example, most of the respondents are residents of the Chaoshan area, lacking the perspective of Chaoshan people living in other regions or countries.

The limited time of this study did not allow for an in-depth exploration of the long-term changes in the Red Head Boat culture. Cultural identity is a dynamic process that may change over time. The responses provided by the respondents mainly reflected current views and lacked analysis of the long-term span of past and future changes.

This study mainly relies on the oral history and personal experience of the interviewees, which may lead to subjectivity and bias in the information. The interviewees' memories may not be completely accurate, and their answers are limited by their personal experiences and cognition. Although the research adopts the method of thematic analysis, due to the complexity and diversity of the data, there may be problems of insufficient in-depth analysis or omission of certain details. The coding and analysis process may be affected by the subjective judgment of the researcher, affecting the comprehensiveness and objectivity of the conclusions.

### **Directions for Future Research.**

Future research could expand the sample size and select more diverse respondents, including Chaoshan people of different ages, genders, occupations, and social backgrounds, as well as those living in other regions or countries. This approach will help

obtain more comprehensive and representative data, leading to a deeper understanding of the impact of Red-Headed Boat culture among different populations.

Quantitative research methods, such as questionnaires, can be employed to gather larger-scale data and draw more general conclusions through statistical analysis. This will help validate the results of qualitative research and provide more compelling evidence.

Long-term follow-up research could be conducted to observe the dynamic changes in the cultural identity of Chaoshan people related to Red-Headed Boat culture. Through multiple surveys and comparative analyses, the evolution of cultural identity over time and in response to social changes can be revealed, providing deeper insights.

Cross-cultural comparisons in future research could explore the impact of Red-Headed Boat culture in different cultural contexts. For example, comparing the roles of Red-Headed Boat culture in identity recognition within Chaoshan communities in Southeast Asian countries, Europe, and the United States would enhance our understanding of the global spread and influence of cultural symbols.

Future studies could also delve into the specific methods and mechanisms of inheriting Red-Headed Boat culture, such as through family education, school education, and community activities. Analyzing the effectiveness and influencing factors of these different methods can provide more practical suggestions to promote the preservation and development of Red-Headed Boat culture.

Additionally, research could be extended to other Chaoshan cultural symbols, such as the Chaoshan dialect, cuisine, and religious beliefs, to explore their roles in the identity of Chaoshan people. Comparing the influence of various cultural symbols will help reveal the diversity and complexity of Chaoshan cultural identity. By addressing the research limitations and proposing directions for future studies, it is hoped that the impact of the Red-Headed Boat on Chaoshan identity can be further explored, enriching related cultural research and providing robust support for the protection and inheritance of Chaoshan culture.

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