

# Research on the Contemporary Significance of Creating the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation: A Case Study of Red Education Cultural Relics in Guangdong

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**Abstract:** At present, China is undergoing a period of profound transformation unseen in a century. Taking cultural relics related to revolutionary education as a focal point to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of China's outstanding culture represents an effective pathway for the inheritance and development of Chinese culture, as well as for upholding a shared national spirit. This study takes educational cultural relics in Guangdong as its subject matter, integrating multidisciplinary perspectives from ethnology, cultural heritage studies, and pedagogy to construct a theoretical model of "cultural relics–cultural identity–sense of community" and to reveal its underlying operational logic and mechanisms of transformation. Concurrently, the study explores the logical connection between revolutionary educational cultural relics and the consolidation of a sense of community for the Chinese nation. It analyses how the creative transformation and innovative development of these cultural relics can help build outstanding cultures across all ethnic groups, thereby fostering a sense of community within the Chinese nation. It summarizes Chinese wisdom and solutions in this regard. This study posits that revolutionary educational cultural relics contribute to the formation of a shared understanding of the origins of Chinese education and represent a practical pathway to creating a shared historical memory. They are conducive to strengthening cultural identity with the great motherland, the Chinese nation, the Communist Party of China, and the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

**Keywords:** Red Education Cultural Relics; Guangdong; Sense of the Chinese National Community; Contemporary Significance

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## 1. Introduction

Educational cultural relics refer to tangible cultural heritage within the field of education that embodies the essence, elements, and forms of cultural heritage and possesses cultural values in history, science, art, and education (Wang, 2018). Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized: "Red resources bear witness to our Party's arduous yet glorious struggle and represent our most precious spiritual wealth." Creating a strong sense of the Chinese national community is a fundamental and systematic undertaking for the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It constitutes the central theme of the Party's ethnic work in the new era. In March 2022, Guangdong Province formally implemented the "Guangdong Provincial Regulations on the Protection of Revolutionary Sites", which explicitly require the "deepening of the exploration, interpretation and dissemination of the value of revolutionary sites". The Guangdong region was the cradle of China's modern

and contemporary democratic revolution, leaving behind an extremely rich and distinctive array of red educational cultural heritage resources. Consequently, Guangdong's red educational cultural heritage holds significant theoretical value and contemporary significance in terms of creating a strong sense of the Chinese national community, propelling all ethnic groups towards modernization, and building a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation.

## **2. Literature Review**

To summarize the relevant academic findings, research into revolutionary cultural relics has attracted the attention of scholars. In summary, this research can be divided into four main themes:

Firstly, the construction of a knowledge framework for red revolutionary cultural resources and the preservation of revolutionary sites. Representative works include Wang (2022), who argues that Shaoguan's revolutionary culture has its own practical and theoretical logic underpinning its formation and development. Chen (2022) takes the development of information technology in Guangdong as a starting point; this study explores in depth the pathways for the conservation and development of revolutionary heritage sites. At the same time, it proposes targeted measures to explore new media technologies and create diverse forms of communication, whilst prioritizing conservation. Second, the value and role of integrating red educational cultural relics into the practical teaching of ideological and political courses. Representative works include Shi (2024), which explores the integration of revolutionary heritage with the ideological and political education of grassroots rural cadres. Given that current research primarily focuses on university students, it proposes incorporating revolutionary heritage into the ideological and political education of grassroots rural cadres. Zhan (2016) believes that education in the "red culture" draws upon the material and spiritual heritage created and bequeathed by our forebears since modern times to promote, propagate and instil the mainstream ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This enables those receiving such education to consciously develop a sense of historical and cultural identity with the Party and the nation's history, thereby deepening their understanding of socialism with Chinese characteristics. As the birthplace of China's modern democratic revolution and a frontier of reform and opening-up, Guangdong is rich in resources relating to the "red culture". Liu and Ding (2025) believed that tangible testimonies to the Communist Party of China's century-long struggle, revolutionary cultural relics, embody a rich heritage of revolutionary spirit and culture and serve as vital resources for ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Integrating revolutionary cultural relics into the integrated development of ideological and political education courses across these levels holds significant contemporary value. Thirdly, the exploration and construction of the revolutionary spirit of the Communist Party of China through red revolutionary cultural relics. Representative works include Lian (2019), who believed that "red culture" represents the culmination of the Communist Party of China's nearly century-long struggle. From the revolutionary era to the period of socialist construction, countless patriots and idealists, in their fight for the liberation, independence and prosperity of the Chinese nation, achieved immortal feats and demonstrated an indomitable spirit through their struggle, dedication and even sacrifice; these have coalesced into "red culture". Consequently, "red culture" encompasses not only the revolutionary culture of the New Democratic era but also the various spiritual traditions that emerged during the period of socialist construction. Tang and Gui (2023) examined the history of the Communist Party of China's pioneering endeavours, struggles, and revolutionary spirit through the lens of red cultural relics, vividly illustrating the Party's resplendent revolutionary spirit. Fourthly, the exploration of pathways for integrating artificial intelligence with revolutionary cultural relics. Representative works include Sun (2025) took the "Former Site of the Shandong Provincial Government and the Headquarters of the 115th Division of the Eighth Route Army" as an example, by applying a methodology that integrates revolutionary cultural relics with artificial intelligence—and with the robust support of AI technology—these relics can contribute to the practice of ideological and political education across multiple dimensions, including digital conversion, intelligent guided tours and personalized learning. Shen and Li (2025) proposed that efforts to protect and preserve revolutionary cultural relics should focus on enriching the substance of intellectual property through humanistic values, utilizing artificial intelligence to create a new system for smart experiences and management, and employing digital media to foster new forms of dynamic dissemination. Wang et al. (2025) Using a literature review and logical analysis, this study systematically examines the underlying logic, practical challenges, and implementation pathways by which new-quality productive forces empower the conservation and utilization of revolutionary cultural heritage.

Since the concept of “creating a strong sense of the Chinese national community” was first proposed in the new era, scholars have been discussing how to integrate the protection and utilization of cultural relics and heritage with this objective. Three main strands of research can be identified: firstly, treating cultural relics and heritage as cultural resources that can be utilized to foster a strong sense of the Chinese national community; secondly, exploring new approaches to the protection and utilization of cultural relics and heritage with this objective as the central theme; and thirdly, examining the reciprocal relationship between fostering a strong sense of the Chinese national community and the protection and utilization of cultural relics and heritage.

In summary, whilst existing research findings offer diverse perspectives, there is a tendency towards a narrow focus in academic approaches, manifested primarily in the following ways: Firstly, comprehensive research on cultural relics related to revolutionary education exhibits a marked lack of geographical and curricular diversity, centring almost exclusively on a few historic revolutionary base areas across the country and ideological and political education courses, whilst neglecting a comprehensive study of such relics in Guangdong; Secondly, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) contains few case studies or comprehensive analyses of Guangdong’s revolutionary educational heritage, indicating that research into and exploration of such heritage in Guangdong has not been sufficiently in-depth or meticulous; thirdly, research on Guangdong’s revolutionary educational heritage from the perspectives of architecture, art and ideological and political education currently dominates the field, whilst studies adopting the perspectives of cultural heritage and pedagogy are virtually non-existent. This study aims to analyse the logical connection between Guangdong’s revolutionary educational heritage and the consolidation of the Chinese nation’s shared consciousness. The research question is to analyse the dialectical relationship between the two in terms of thematic focus, value objectives and specific contexts, and to explore the cultural connotations of Guangdong’s revolutionary educational heritage within the context of Chinese culture.

### **3. How Is This Possible: A Theoretical Examination of Red Educational Cultural Relics in Guangdong**

Revolutions and wars have always been part of history, and the cultural heritage that emerges alongside them is also regarded as a vital component of historical education. Red education cultural relics in Guangdong refer to material cultural relics of historical, artistic and scientific value that have been preserved from educational activities carried out during the period of the New Democratic Revolution led by the Communist Party of China in the history of the Guangdong revolution. These primarily include the former sites of schools of all levels and types established by the Communist Party of China in Guangdong, along with their associated exhibition halls and museums; they also encompass the former residences and memorial halls of Guangdong’s revolutionary educators; furthermore, they include various educational cultural relics such as educational documents, textbooks, graduation certificates and old photographs, as well as precious educational artworks and decorative arts. The red educational relics of modern Guangdong have developed in tandem with the revolutionary and military struggles. The numerous red educational sites and representative buildings in Guangdong stand as historical witnesses to the revolutionary history of modern Guangdong, possessing significant historical, academic, artistic and educational value.

#### **3.1 Historical Characteristics: The Non-Renewable Nature of Revolutionary Educational Cultural Relics**

The irreplaceable nature of red educational relics refers to the fact that, as products of a specific historical period, their physical form, historical information and educational value are unique and cannot be replicated. Once damaged or lost, even with modern restoration or conservation techniques, it is impossible to restore their original historical authenticity and unique cultural value. The former site of the Republic of China Military Academy, also known as the Army Officers’ School, is situated on Changzhou Island in Huangpu District, Guangzhou, China. Originally housing the Qing Dynasty’s Army Primary School and Naval School, it is a significant historical site and representative architectural complex in modern educational history. It was designated a Provincial-level Cultural Heritage Site in Guangdong in 1962, and the site itself was designated a National-level Cultural Heritage Site in 1988.

However, on 25 February 2010, the Guangzhou Daily published a report entitled “The Former Site of the Republic of China Military Academy Alumni Association: Deep Excavation of Foundations and Forced Structural Alterations-Who Destroyed the Cultural Heritage to Open a Nightclub?” Following an investigation, the competent authority for the former site of the

Republic of China Military Academy is the Guangzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture. On this occasion, the tenant carried out renovations without approval, resulting in damage to the site. This has provoked a strong reaction both China and abroad, particularly among the vast number of Republic of China Military Academy and their relatives, and has caused a serious negative impact.

Red educational cultural relics originated during the era of revolutionary warfare. Despite the harsh conditions, the Communist Party of China continued to prioritize education at all levels and in all forms, mobilizing teachers, students, and patriotic figures to play active roles in accordance with local circumstances. Due to the materials used and the specific environments in which they were situated, these cultural relics are difficult to preserve, and the ravages of war have caused significant damage. With the advancement of modern technology, there is a misconception that the conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary buildings is straightforward. Furthermore, as the economic and collectable value of red educational cultural relics is not considered as high as that of ancient cultural relics, they are often overlooked. Cultural relics themselves contain a wealth of historical information. As physical materials that supplement written records, their material properties are of great importance; consequently, their value is equally irreplaceable. Behind every piece of revolutionary heritage lies untold information. At a time when China is undergoing a once-in-a-century transformation, the protection and transmission of such heritage is crucial. Taking these cultural relics as a focal point to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of China's outstanding culture is an effective means of preserving and advancing Chinese culture, whilst upholding our shared national spirit.

### **3.2 Cultural Characteristics: The Uniqueness of Red Education Cultural Relics**

Red educational heritage sites are directly linked to the development of revolutionary and military history, forming a vital part of China's educational history. They bear witness to the evolution of revolutionary and military education, embody the strengthening of such education, and bear a distinct "revolutionary" character. Guangdong Province boasts over 4,300 revolutionary sites and numerous red educational bases, including 13 national red tourism classic scenic spots and several batches of Guangdong Provincial Patriotic Education Bases. In October 2023, the Publicity Department of the Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China designated 20 new sites as the tenth batch of Guangdong Provincial Patriotic Education Bases. For example, in the Guangzhou area, these include the former site of the Peasants' Movement Training School founded by Comrade Mao Zedong, the Guangzhou Uprising Memorial Hall and Martyrs' Cemetery, the Sanyuanli People's Anti-British Struggle Memorial Hall, Huanghuagang Seventy Two Martyrs Cemetery, and the former site of the Republic of China Military Academy. Other key sites include: Memorial Museum of Marshal Ye Jianying in Meizhou City, the Ye Ting Memorial Hall in Huizhou City, Lianhua Shan Park in Shenzhen, the former site of the Red Palace and Red Square in Shanwei City, the Sun Yat-sen Former Residence and Memorial Hall in Zhongshan City, and the Opium War Museum in Dongguan City. Each site bears the memories of revolutionary and military education, and its unique educational value is of great importance to both social development and personal growth.

Located in Nanhai District, Foshan City, Guangdong Province, the Kang Youwei's Former Residence was the home of Kang Youwei, a renowned modern educator, revolutionary and thinker. In his early years, Kang Youwei founded the The Myriad Trees Academy in Changxingli, Guangzhou, where he gathered disciples to teach, researched reformist ideas and nurtured reformist talent. It was in this old house that Kang Youwei spent the most formative years of his youth. In 1983, the Kang Youwei Former Residence was restored and designated as the "Kang Youwei Historical Exhibition Hall". In 1986, the "Kang Youwei Memorial Hall" was established on the site of the former residence. In 1987, a new Kang Youwei Memorial Hall was constructed adjacent to the former residence. Through various educational cultural relics and historical materials, the exhibition halls provide an objective and comprehensive account of his life's quest to save the nation and its people. The former residence preserves and displays a wealth of precious historical documents and educational cultural relics, possessing unparalleled historical, educational and cultural significance.

### **3.3 Shared Characteristics: The Social Educational Value of Red Cultural Relics**

Red educational cultural relics possess immense artistic and educational value; their aesthetic, pleasurable and visual qualities offer people opportunities for leisure, enjoyment, learning and innovation. Precious red educational sites provide aesthetic

enjoyment and a historical immersion, serving as places of learning. Precious red educational crafts, works of art, and the calligraphy and paintings of revolutionary educators allow people to experience aesthetic pleasure and be imbued with traditional cultural knowledge.

Sun Yat-sen's calligraphy is held in the archives of Fudan University. Sun Yat-sen, the great pioneer of modern Chinese democratic revolution, a revolutionary, statesman and theorist, is revered as the Father of the Nation. Throughout his long revolutionary career, Sun Yat-sen left behind numerous calligraphic works, which serve as a testament to his revolutionary endeavours, a vehicle for his ideas, and a banner of revolutionary culture. Among Sun Yat-sen's surviving works, many deal with the theme of revolutionary education, mostly reflecting his famous sayings, aphorisms, aspirations and ideals regarding education.

Sun Zhongshan placed great importance on education throughout his life and inscribed famous mottos for various schools. For example, Sun Yat-sen personally wrote the Republic of China Military Academy's motto. "Latercomers Surpassing the Pioneers" is a work personally inscribed by Sun Yat-sen and presented to Cuiheng School; it is preserved at the Sun Yat-sen Former Residence Memorial Hall in Cuiheng Village, Guangdong. "Carrying Forward the Past and Opening Up the Future" was inscribed by Sun Yat-sen for Zhengxian School; "Strive for a Bright Future" was inscribed by Sun Yat-sen for the Fudan Annual. "Seek knowledge broadly, inquire diligently, reflect carefully, distinguish clearly, and practise earnestly" is Sun Yat-sen's handwritten inscription of the famous educational maxim from *The Book of Rites The Doctrine of the Mean*, which served as the school motto inscribed for the inauguration ceremony of the National Guangdong University (also known as the "Literary Hall", renamed Sun Yat-sen University in the autumn of 1923).

The collection, exhibition and study of cultural relics relating to revolutionary history can enrich the content of school education, address its shortcomings, and provide new venues and opportunities for both school and family education. Such cultural relics serve as vital centres for patriotic education; they act as classrooms and textbooks, playing a crucial role in enhancing people's cultural literacy.

## **4. Why It Is Feasible: Practical Considerations Regarding Red Education Cultural Relics in Guangdong**

### **4.1 Historical Identity: Uncovering Historical Resources of the Chinese Nation's Community through Guangdong's Red Educational Cultural Relics**

"Patriotism is the deepest and most enduring emotion in the world; it is the source of moral integrity and the foundation of meritorious deeds." (General Office of the State Council, PRC, 2020) Red education cultural relics are material cultural heritage left behind by humanity's revolutionary historical activities, possessing historical, educational and scientific value. They are imbued with the profound patriotic sentiments and earnest aspirations of our predecessors, and serve as vivid teaching materials for patriotic education among students.

Guangdong's revolutionary heritage sites embody the collective memory of the Chinese nation's unity and resistance during crises in modern history. The former site of the Guangdong People's Anti-Japanese Liberation Army Headquarters—the Yu Clan Ancestral Hall in Heshan—is a prime example. This ancient building, which blends Lingnan architectural art with the spirit of revolutionary struggle, witnessed the formal establishment of the Guangdong People's Anti-Japanese Liberation Army and the issuance of the "Telegram" on 20 January 1945, marking a new phase in the Party's independent leadership of the anti-Japanese armed struggle in the central Guangdong region. (JM D, 2025) As an irreplaceable historical witness, the Yu Clan Ancestral Hall bears the weight of profound collective national memory; its historical significance is embodied in a "tangible history textbook". (JM D, 2025) They bound their own lives inextricably to the future of the motherland and the nation's destiny, transforming their patriotic fervour into concrete action and interpreting the spirit of patriotism with their youth and blood.

Making effective use of resources relating to revolutionary heritage means unearthing the historical and cultural elements they contain, preserving the patriotic educational values left behind from the revolutionary era, and promoting the spirit of patriotism. Revolutionary heritage museums, exhibition halls, and similar venues have a duty to provide patriotic education. Fully exploring Guangdong's revolutionary heritage resources is essential for us to appreciate and understand our contemporary educational mission; it is also a vital component of in-depth, high-quality education and educational development, as well as a

key basis for formulating strategies to protect revolutionary heritage. The development of a digital repository of Guangdong's revolutionary educational heritage provides primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with a vivid, engaging and locally relevant source of ideological and political education, thereby enhancing its appeal, impact and effectiveness, and fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

#### **4.2 Identity: Carrying forward the Spirit of the Chinese Nation's Community through Guangdong's Revolutionary Heritage**

Striving is the source of hope and light for the nation; it is precisely through this spirit of striving that the Chinese people have upheld the backbone of the nation. Red educational cultural relics represent the history of the Communist Party of China, leading the people to forge ahead with perseverance and hard work, bearing witness to the hardships and challenges of the revolutionary process. They embody the shared values and cultural heritage forged by the Chinese nation through prolonged revolutionary struggles and practical endeavours in nation-building, constituting a spiritual treasure shared by all Chinese people. As a key cradle of the modern Chinese revolution and a vanguard of reform and opening-up, Guangdong's revolutionary educational cultural relics are imbued with rich elements of communal culture.

The Dongguan Dalingshan Anti-Japanese Base Area has developed the "Retracing the East Column's Path" initiative into a signature educational programme. Young people wear replicas of the era's military uniforms and, within the complex of historic sites, take part in simulated forced marches, learn battlefield first aid, and sing "The Song of the Dongjiang Column". This immersive experience is not intended to recreate the brutality of war, but rather to allow participants to 'step into' the shoes of revolutionary soldiers and understand "why they were willing to sacrifice everything for the nation". Inside the Liu Clan Ancestral Hall at the site, the guide emphasizes that most of the guerrilla fighters back then were local Hakka youths, defending their fellow villagers and the land where their ancestors had lived. "Defending one's hometown is defending the nation"-this natural elevation from local to national identity strikes a chord with visitors through the spatial narrative.

Through in-depth research into and the widespread dissemination of these cultural relics, more people can gain a profound understanding of the historical inevitability of the formation of the Chinese national community, and recognize the shared roots and the interdependence of our destinies. This fosters a strong sense of belonging and identity, thereby further consolidating the cultural foundations of the Chinese national community. At the same time, the spirit of pioneering courage and pragmatic progressiveness embodied in Guangdong's revolutionary heritage aligns with the demands of China's reform, opening-up and modernization, providing valuable cultural resources for strengthening national cohesion and centripetal force under new historical conditions.

#### **4.3 Shared Identity: Tracing the Cultural Roots of the Chinese Nation through Guangdong's Red Educational Cultural Relics**

The progression from "historical identity" to "identity" and then to "shared identity" is a gradual process that moves from objective understanding to subjective belonging, and from individual belonging to collective consensus. Shared identity addresses the core question of "what we collectively uphold"—it does not dwell on differences but focuses on common ground; it does not emphasize boundaries but highlights integration. Ideals guide the direction of life, and convictions determine the success or failure of one's endeavours. Without ideals and convictions, one will suffer from a "lack of calcium" in one's spirit."(Xi, 2022) The cultural relics of Guangdong's revolutionary education embody precisely those shared values, shared sentiments and shared spiritual pursuits that the Chinese nation forged amidst the perils of modern times, transcending region, class, ethnicity and even political parties. Each of these historic sites is a true reflection of the faith sought by the vast numbers of Guangdong students pursuing revolutionary ideals, chronicling the arduous journey of teachers and students in the revolutionary base areas as they established and ran schools amid the smoke of battle.

Among Guangdong's revolutionary cultural relics, nothing evokes a stronger sense of shared identity than the common will of the entire nation to "resist Japan and save the nation". The Dongjiang Column was a people's anti-Japanese armed force led by the Communist Party of China in Guangdong, yet its historical records reveal a remarkable 'unity in diversity'. The original copy of the "Declaration on the Establishment of the Dongjiang Column" (2 December 1943), preserved at the Guangdong Dongjiang Column Memorial Hall, begins with the words: "We have come together under the leadership of the

Communist Party of China, uniting the brave people's soldiers from the Dongjiang, Pearl River and Han River regions, as well as all patriotic compatriots who refuse to be slaves of a conquered nation, to form this organization." The declaration bears not only the signatures of the Column's leaders. However, it is also accompanied by letters of support from various groups, including workers, farmers, students, overseas Chinese, and compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao. This demonstrates that the Dongjiang Column was not an armed force representing a single class or region, but rather a community of shared destiny formed by patriots from all walks of life in South China, united by the common principle of "refusing to be slaves of a conquered nation".

Mr Fei Xiaotong's maxim, "Each admires its own beauty, admires the beauty of others, shares in the beauty of all, and achieves a harmonious world", succinctly encapsulates the logic underlying the formation of shared identity. The cultural roots of the Chinese national community, as embodied in Guangdong's red education heritage, represent precisely this wisdom of "diversity within unity": it acknowledges the cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups such as the Cantonese, Hakka and Chaoshan, whilst also embracing the distinct experiences of overseas Chinese, compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao, and ethnic minorities; it respects everyone's attachment to their homeland, love for their dialect and roots in their clan, yet consistently guides people to integrate the individual into the collective, to elevate local identity to national identity, and to extend kinship ties into bonds of the nation.

## **5. What Can Be Done: The Contemporary Value of Guangdong's Red Education Cultural Relics in Strengthening the Sense of a Chinese National Community**

Red educational cultural relics embody the spiritual qualities of the Chinese Communist Party and offer rich educational value in history, science, art, and society. As China enters a new era of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is essential to explore and effectively leverage the contemporary value of red educational cultural relics to forge a strong sense of the Chinese national community. These cultural relics serve not only as a spiritual bond that unites the collective memory of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, but also as a practical pathway to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of red culture; furthermore, they constitute a strategic resource for addressing cultural shocks in the era of globalization and strengthening national identity.

### **5.1 Strengthening the Sense of Shared Identity within the Chinese Nation through the Tangible Heritage of Guangdong's Revolutionary Education**

The "tangible forms" of Guangdong's red educational heritage refer to the transformation of the grand theme of creating a strong sense of the Chinese national community into tangible, accessible, and interactive physical forms and spatial vessels. These forms are not abstract ideological preaching, but rather shared memories and emotional connections embedded within specific revolutionary sites, cultural relics, commemorative spaces and symbolic systems.

Guangdong has brought forth cultural relics from the depths of history, each containing specific details and clues that help to forge a strong sense of the Chinese national community. For example, among the 209 cultural relics on display at the "Bay Area in Flames, an Immortal Monument-Guangdong-Hong Kong War of Resistance Exhibition", Ye Ting's passport—used when he travelled to Vietnam to raise funds for the anti-Japanese war effort—is particularly noteworthy. (GD D, 2025) This passport is not merely a document of personal identity; it embodies the historical ties that bind the people of Guangdong and Hong Kong, sharing the same breath and destiny, and serves as tangible evidence of the close connection between overseas Chinese and the motherland during the War of Resistance. The "Declaration on the Establishment of the Dongjiang Column of the Guangdong People's Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Force" on display was donated in 1965 by Mo Guangzhi, a soldier of the Dongjiang Column. The declaration states: "Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, we have brought together the brave people's soldiers from the Dongjiang, Pearl River and Hanjiang regions, as well as all patriotic compatriots who refuse to be slaves of a conquered nation, to organise ourselves collectively." The "tangible" nature of this declaration lies in the fact that it captures, in written form, the shift in identity among a multi-class group of patriots, from acting "for their own masters" to "uniting to face the nation's crisis".

Guangdong's cultural relics related to revolutionary history foster a sense of shared identity within the Chinese national community through "tangible means", manifesting in multi-layered practices ranging from the macro to the micro: cultural

relic trails weave a spatial network for the community; digital technology constructs virtual spaces for shared experiences; the details of cultural relics carry the specific codes of communal identity; ceremonial activities create participatory spaces that foster shared emotions; and architectural remains embody the overlapping layers of identity. Together, these “tangible” approaches form an accessible, tangible and participatory educational system for the community.

## **5.2 Reflections on the Practice of Red Education through Cultural Relics in Guangdong, and the Promotion of Inter-Ethnic Interaction within the Chinese National Community**

Guangdong’s revolutionary heritage sites hold unique contemporary value in promoting ethnic unity. A striking feature of these sites is that many of the revolutionary sites are themselves spaces of traditional culture—clan halls, academies, temples and guild halls. Communists and revolutionaries skilfully utilized these spaces, transforming traditional social organizational resources into networks for revolutionary mobilization. This approach did not sever ties with tradition, but rather revitalized it, creating a relationship in which revolutionary identity overlapped with, rather than replaced, local and clan identities.

The Heshan Yu Clan Ancestral Hall (the former site of the Guangdong People’s Anti-Japanese Liberation Army Headquarters) served as a venue for the Yu clan to worship their ancestors, hold meetings and run schools. It was no coincidence that the anti-Japanese guerrilla forces chose to establish their headquarters here in 1945. On the one hand, the ancestral hall held authority and influence within rural society; holding meetings there made farmers feel that these were “matters concerning their own people”; on the other hand, the cause of resisting Japanese aggression and saving the nation was highly aligned with traditional values such as “defending the ancestral home” and “bringing honour to the family”. When addressing the troops, guerrilla leaders frequently equated “saving the nation” with “protecting the home”, translating revolutionary principles into the language of the clan. This rhetorical strategy transformed the grand narrative of the Chinese national community into “matters within the ancestral hall” and “our own family’s affairs”, thereby significantly lowering the threshold for identification. Today, visitors to the Yu Clan Ancestral Hall can admire traditional features such as the distinctive “wok-ear” walls, plaster reliefs and wood carvings, whilst also viewing anti-Japanese telegrams, battle maps and the daily necessities of the guerrilla fighters. Here, tradition and modernity, clan and nation, converge to present a vivid picture of “unbroken cultural roots and an enduring revolutionary legacy”.

## **5.3 Harnessing the Tangible Achievements of Guangdong’s Revolutionary Heritage to Foster Unity within the Chinese Nation**

The cohesive power of the Chinese national community is founded not only on shared ideals and symbols, but also on shared memories of suffering and glory. The relics of Guangdong’s martyrs are a core resource for building this emotional community. The martyrs’ graves and memorials within the Guangzhou Uprising Martyrs Cemetery, as well as the relics housed in the cemetery museum—a tattered photograph, an unsent letter home, a military uniform riddled with bullet holes—all serve as tangible vessels through which visitors can express their grief and pay their respects. Every year on Qing-ming Festival, tens of thousands of citizens come of their own accord to pay their respects; among them are descendants of the martyrs, but the majority are ordinary citizens who have never met them. The wreaths and memorial couplets they present bear inscriptions such as “Revolutionary martyrs shall live forever” and “The people shall never forget”. This collective act of remembrance unites scattered individuals into a shared emotional ritual, creating a sense of “we”—we are all beneficiaries and guardians of the martyrs’ spirit.

As important repositories of revolutionary history and a source of national cohesion, Guangdong’s revolutionary heritage sites play an irreplaceable role in fostering unity within the Chinese nation. Red heritage sites such as the Yu Clan Ancestral Hall in Heshan are not only witnesses to historical events but also living educational resources. They closely link the grand narrative of the revolution with the daily lives and cultural traditions of the people, allowing visitors to experience an emotional resonance through direct engagement with history, thereby strengthening their sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese national community. Through the protection, restoration and revitalization of these revolutionary heritage sites, more people can gain an understanding of the outstanding contributions made by our revolutionary forebears to national independence and ethnic liberation, and experience the patriotic spirit, spirit of sacrifice and unwavering conviction embodied in them. This spiritual inspiration transcends geographical, ethnic, and generational boundaries, uniting people from diverse groups into a powerful synergy that drives the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

## 6. Conclusion

The organization, analysis, and digitization of cultural relics related to revolutionary education from a cultural heritage perspective are essential to our appreciation and understanding of our contemporary educational mission. They constitute a vital component of in-depth quality education and high-quality educational development, and serve as a key basis for formulating strategies to protect such relics. Red educational cultural relics in Guangdong hold immense contemporary value in creating a strong sense of the Chinese national community. They not only address the questions of “why they are necessary today” and “what can be achieved in the future”, but also serve as a spiritual bond that unites the collective memory of the the Greater Bay Area (GBA). Furthermore, they represent a practical pathway for the creative transformation and innovative development of red culture, as well as a strategic resource for addressing cultural shocks in the era of globalization and strengthening national identity.

The future development of a digital repository of revolutionary cultural relics in Guangdong will provide primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with a vibrant, engaging and localized form of ideological and political education that is both compelling, thereby fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. However, there remain practical challenges to fully realizing the contemporary value of Guangdong’s revolutionary cultural relics. Firstly, the process of passing on revolutionary culture suffers from oversimplification and formalism in education, as well as a lack of participation from younger generations (Sun, 2023); Secondly, the methods used to disseminate and promote certain revolutionary resources remain traditional and lack interactive mechanisms; thirdly, Guangdong’s revolutionary cultural heritage resources face issues such as insufficient public awareness, limited influence, inadequate policy safeguards, insufficient inter-departmental coordination, and inconsistent standards for the protection of some cultural relics (GD D, 2026); Fourthly, in the information age, the impact of emerging cultures has, to some extent, affected the aesthetic recognition and willingness to pass on red culture. To address these challenges, it is necessary to strengthen overall coordination further, reinforce academic support, deepen the integration of culture and tourism, and utilize digital and intelligent technologies to bring cultural relics to life truly.

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