Study on the Inheritance Crisis and Strategies of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei" in Folk Sports

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Abstract: Taking Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" as a case study, using research methods such as literature review, field investigation, expert interviews, and case studies, and combining the author's upbringing in the Huaying Mountain area and immersion in local culture since childhood, this study approaches the national intangible cultural heritage of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage to analyze its inheritance crisis and strategies. The findings reveal issues such as the loss and generalization of inheritance content, a single mode of inheritance, the loss of inheritors, and other objective influencing factors. Inheritance strategies proposed include raising public awareness of intangible cultural heritage, strengthening the construction and improvement of cultural centers and museums, increasing government guidance and policy support for heritage investment, and paying more attention to inheritors and inheritance groups.

1. Introduction
Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" is the most traditional folk sports activity in the Huaying Mountain area. It not only carries the historical development of various cultures in the region, such as agricultural, immigrant, Buddhist, and red cultures, but also promotes ethnic identity, strengthens social harmony, enriches amateur sports activities, enhances public health, improves artistic aesthetics, and cultivates the spirit of hard work, optimism, perseverance, and positivity among the people of Huaying. It also fosters a humorous and witty character. However, with the development of the times and social changes, the precious cultural heritage of intangible cultural heritage Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" is facing a huge inheritance dilemma. This article takes the specific case of the intangible cultural heritage folk sports Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" as a case study. Therefore, examining its influencing factors and crisis in the current inheritance process, exploring suitable inheritance strategies for today's social development, and providing theoretical references for related projects in the category of intangible cultural heritage folk sports have practical significance.

2. The Historical Origins and Myths of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei"
To gain a deeper understanding of why Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" came into existence and the inheritance content it carries, it is important to trace its history. Through a review of related literature and interviews with relevant individuals, it has been found that the historical origins of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" are mainly composed of beautiful myths, folk stories, and some historical records.

2.1 The Myth of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei"
An interesting myth is circulated in the Huaying Mountain area. According to the myth, there were some demons and monsters in the Huaying Mountain area who were extremely jealous of the sweet and innocent love between the "Ba'er Ge" (sedan chair carriers) and the "Yaomei" (young women) amidst the beautiful mountains and waters. Therefore, these monsters tried their best to create difficulties and destroy their love, ultimately turning the loving couple into fossils that stand tall in the Huaying Mountains. This became one of the famous attractions in the Huaying Mountain Stone Forest Scenic Area, known as the "Thousand-Year Kiss" site. It later became a symbol...
of ethnic unity and eternal love in the Huaying Mountain area.

2.2 Folk Stories of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei"

The historical origins of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" can actually be traced to a folk story that has been passed down among the people of Huaying. During the Tang Dynasty, villagers from dozens of miles around Huaying Mountain would go to Gao Deng Mountain or Bao Ding in Huaying Mountain every year during the lunar months of February to June to burn incense and worship, praying for blessings and peace. In that era, local customs stipulated that unmarried women, also known as "Yaomei" today, were not allowed to go up the mountain to burn incense, worship Buddha, and sightsee. By coincidence, there was a wealthy family living on the west side of Huaying Mountain, who had a pair of twin daughters who were very beautiful. Their parents loved them dearly, but every year from February to June, during the busy worship period on Huaying Mountain, the twin daughters could only watch the pilgrims freely go up the mountain to burn incense, worship, and participate in activities while they were unable to experience the festive atmosphere themselves. This caused them great distress, and they could only feel despondent at home. Over time, the health of the once beautiful twin daughters deteriorated, and their rosy complexions turned sallow. Their parents were extremely worried and sought the help of skilled doctors to no avail. Eventually, the twin daughters confided their inner desires to their mother, expressing their wish to go up the mountain to worship and participate in the festivities like the other pilgrims. The mother then relayed her daughters' wishes to their father, who was at a loss for what to do. By chance, a scholar passed by and heard about the situation. After some thought, he visited the family and suggested to the father, "This is not a difficult problem to solve. You can use some silver to organize a village competition and use poles to carry the unmarried women (Yaomei) who want to go up the mountain to burn incense, worship Buddha, and sightsee. Isn't this a feasible solution?" After listening to the scholar's proposal, the father felt it was indeed viable, and after discussing it with the local villagers, they decided to hold a "Pole Sliding and Carrying the Yaomei" competition according to the scholar's suggestion, to fulfill the wishes of the local women who wanted to go up the mountain for worship and sightseeing [1]. Since then, the event has been held every March, with local gentry specially organizing it for young women in the village to go up the mountain to worship and sightsee.

2.3 Literature Records of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei"

According to the literature records in "Jinying Ji" and "Huaying (Yin) Mountain Annals," it can be inferred from the Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai's "Chang Gan Xing" verse "The young man rides a bamboo horse, circling the bed and playing with green plums," that the practice of pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" probably originated during the Tang and Song dynasties. Due to the high and steep mountainous terrain of the Huaying Mountain range, with winding and rugged roads, it was inconvenient for pilgrims to ride horses or mules up the mountain, hence the emergence of the pole sliding practice. In particular, during the temple fairs in Huaying Mountain from February to June of the lunar calendar, people from hundreds of miles around would continuously flock to Gao Deng Temple on Gao Deng Mountain or Guang Ming Temple at Bao Ding to burn incense and pray for peace, health, and favorable weather. Besides a small amount of water transportation, high-ranking officials, wealthy families, and well-bred ladies often used poles as a means of transportation. As the number of riders increased, so did the number of people engaged in the pole sliding industry. In some villages, there were even pole sliding guilds and gangs that emerged. Some landless and unemployed poor people relied solely on carrying poles for a living. Wealthy and prestigious families would often use pole sliding as a means of transportation to show their nobility when going out or marrying off their daughters.

3. The Crisis and Dilemma in the Inheritance of Huaying Mountain Pole Sliding and Carrying the "Yaomei"

3.1 Loss and Generalization of Inheritance Content

Through field visits, it is known that the content of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" is quite rich. There are several hundred types of chants for pole carriers alone, which are used to communicate road conditions. In the 1990s, a gentleman named Li Yonglin collected about 200 of these chants while working in Huaying. He composed tunes for them using the erhu (a Chinese stringed instrument) and recorded them on paper. Unfortunately, his work was never published in articles or other forms, and he eventually moved away from Huaying to settle in another place. It is now impossible to contact him.

Partly because the importance of this content was not sufficiently recognized at the time and its inheritance was inadequate, much of it has been lost. As time goes on, the inheritance of the "intangible cultural heritage" of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" has become increasingly "generalized." The content of the inheritance has become simplified, with fewer and fewer people genuinely concerned about its "cultural connotations" and "core skills." More focus has been placed on whether it can generate more social impact and economic benefits, causing the core value of the "intangible cultural heritage" of Huaying Mountain pole sliding and carrying the "Yaomei" to become increasingly blurred.
3.2 Singular Inheritance Mode

The inheritance of folk culture carries the essence of local customs and the spirit of the times. It is closely related to specific geographical and natural environments, religious festivals, customs and habits, social ecology, products, historical backgrounds, and human landscapes. It cannot be inherited simply through verbal instruction and personal demonstration. Due to the unique nature of the project, its inheritance mode has gradually become singular, mainly relying on group inheritance (learning through competitive events, folk performances, etc.). Although the group inheritance mode can quickly bring it into the public's view, relying solely on group inheritance is far from enough and can easily lead to a "fast-food culture."

Group-based inheritance makes it difficult for inheritors and the public to truly appreciate the "cultural connotations" and "core skills" of intangible cultural heritage. The inheritance of folk sports culture requires inheritors or the public to engage in long-term, continuous practice, deep contemplation, and personal experience in order to truly touch the core content and values of the culture. This is fundamentally different from inheritance gained through short-lived, lively activities and competitions.

3.3 Loss of Inheritors

As ancient people said, "When the person is gone, the art is lost." It is evident that the term "gone" here has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it refers to the "loss of the person," which means that the main representative inheritors are no longer around or have left the field. On the other hand, it refers to the "loss of the art," which means that the art loses its unique essence and spirit [2]. Hence, the protection of intangible cultural heritage lies in protecting the inheritors. Some scholars have compared inheritors to the threads of folk culture. Chinese folk culture is transmitted and reproduced through countless threads, and the breakage of any single thread signifies the endangerment of a culture. If a large number of threads are broken, it represents the disappearance of folk culture [3].

Regarding the issue of inheritors, the problem of insufficient successors for Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" has not yet been truly resolved. Through field investigations, it was found that the current inheritors are generally older and have limited energy. Some have already left the Huaying area and moved to the cities where their children live. There are very few younger inheritors, and factors such as low income, limited practical value of the skills, and low social demand have led to a lack of enthusiasm for the inheritance of this intangible cultural heritage. The rich cultural resources of the Huaying Mountain area and the low material living standards of the local people have become intertwined and mutually exclusive contradictions. Improving the living standards of intangible cultural heritage inheritors has become the top priority. If the livelihood issues of inheritors cannot be resolved, those who practice the skills will naturally leave.

3.4 Other Objective Influencing Factors

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the transmission of Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" is also affected by some objective factors. They are mainly manifested in the following aspects: Firstly, the funding for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Through field investigations, it is known that the "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" in Huaying City basically participates in three or more large-scale events each year, such as the Huaying Mountain Culture and Tourism Festival, Guang'an City Tourism and Culture Festival, and provincial intangible cultural heritage exhibitions. However, the "Sliding Poles" is essentially a non-profit project. Although the government provides some financial support after successfully applying for provincial intangible cultural heritage status, there are still too many expenses, resulting in insufficient funds. This makes it difficult for the project to operate, and the people involved in it have been in a state of natural development, with intermittent activities and unstable personnel, which is extremely unfavorable for the inheritance of the Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters." Secondly, the rapid social development and the impact of Western culture. The inheritance of a culture cannot be separated from its historical and social environment. Nowadays, the rapid development of society and the constant change of culture are continuously compressing the living space of traditional folk culture. Since the late Qing Dynasty, Western culture was introduced to China, and after the "Cultural Revolution," Western "products" were imported. In addition to the import of tangible goods, Western sports culture was also "imported" into China. The sense of technology, modernity, and competition it presents has brought a significant impact on the development of China's own folk sports culture. More young people are willing to practice Western sports, such as track and field and basketball [4]. The import of "products" is an excellent way of economic and cultural exchange. However, blindly pursuing Western sports culture, squeezing and neglecting China's excellent traditional folk sports culture, has led to the stagnation, disconnection, or even extinction of the inheritance of some outstanding traditional folk sports cultures in China.

4. Analysis of the Inheritance Countermeasures for Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters"

4.1 Raising the Public's Awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage

As a part of folk culture, folk sports are primarily inherited by the general public. Due to the differences between urban and rural areas, the public's awareness of the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage and folk sports culture is relatively weak, and a lack of deep understanding is quite common [5]. As a "carrier" of
Huaying Mountain's historical culture and a "witness" to its historical development, the intangible cultural heritage of Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" truly reflects the production and life of the local people at that time. It embodies the hardworking and enduring behavioral norms, humorous and witty life attitudes, and constantly innovative cultural concepts of the people in Huaying Mountain. It records the arduous years of armed struggle in Huaying Mountain and the heroic spirit of the people who fought bravely, fearless of sacrifices and dared to take responsibility. It has a distinctive and irreplaceable cultural attribute. Nowadays, due to various factors, the development of this cultural practice has stagnated for some time. In addition, China is currently in a period of social transformation, facing the sharp contradiction between the coexistence of new culture and traditional folk culture. In this regard, both the government and the public should be aware that once traditional folk culture is lost, it is irreversible. However, traditional folk culture is the prerequisite for a nation to recognize and rely on. The loss of traditional folk culture means the extinction of a nation's spirit. Therefore, it is indispensable to enhance the understanding of intangible cultural heritage among the general public, especially the younger generation. Only when more people realize the importance of intangible cultural heritage for human development and have a sense of historical mission and social responsibility can the intangible cultural heritage be better inherited.

4.2 Strengthening the Construction and Function Improvement of Cultural Centers and Museums

Firstly, local cultural centers and museums are important venues for the survey, recording, archiving, and preservation of intangible cultural heritage in a region, as well as the prerequisite and foundation for building a favorable cultural environment for intangible cultural heritage. Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters," as a national intangible cultural heritage, has strong "vitality" and "dynamism." With the development of the times, it has shown changes that cater to the development of different periods based on its original foundation. Therefore, its documentation and preservation are not static but require long-term, comprehensive, and three-dimensional records through various forms and methods. Secondly, we should make full use of the social attributes of cultural centers and museums, and regularly or frequently carry out exhibitions, performances, or lectures on the content of Huaying City's intangible cultural heritage projects. A dedicated exhibition area for Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" can be established, displaying valuable information about the intangible cultural heritage items, anecdotes, the journey of the heritage, and its origins for visitors to learn and understand. Additionally, skill inheritors and relevant individuals can be invited to demonstrate their skills and explain Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" at specific times. In summary, the construction and improvement of cultural centers and museums can greatly increase the exposure and understanding of Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" among local and non-local residents. This not only increases the public's attention to the tradition but also helps to better preserve and pass on the intangible cultural heritage [6].

4.3 Strengthen the Emphasis on Inheritors and Inheritance Groups

Intangible cultural heritage inheritors are precious assets for promoting social and economic development and unique resources. Protecting them benefits both the present and future generations [7]. To ensure the proper inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage project "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters," it is essential to highlight the central role of inheritors and inheritance groups.

By focusing on inheritors and inheritance groups, we can protect and cultivate their central role while ensuring that the main content of the inheritance process remains unaltered and unmodified. This approach allows the cultural characteristics and awareness left by the Huaying Mountain ancestors to be preserved and developed, keeping the cultural heritage in its original form and appearance, while also upholding the responsibility of protection, display, and inheritance, revitalizing the "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" with a new vitality in the context of the new era.

Furthermore, we should strengthen the self-learning and teaching activities of inheritors and inheritance groups. Self-learning can enhance the skills of inheritors or inheritance groups, while teaching activities can popularize the intangible cultural heritage project "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" among the general public. Actively establish special protection workshops for the intangible cultural heritage of Huaying Mountain's "Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" and set up relevant protection systems for inheritors or inheritance groups. For example, according to the assessment of the system, provide economic assistance to inheritors or inheritance groups in their daily lives; award relevant certificates, titles, or corresponding professional titles in terms of honor. Only by increasing the emphasis on inheritors and inheritance groups can the intangible cultural heritage "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" be better inherited and continued by future generations.

4.4 Government Strengthening Department Guidance, Increasing Inheritance Investment and Policy Support

Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters has its unique folk sports cultural characteristics and has achieved certain accomplishments on the road to heritage recognition. However, considering the current nationwide promotion, although there has been some progress, it is still not satisfactory and remains unknown to many people. Therefore, government guidance in intangible cultural heritage inheritance, increased investment, and financial
support are still crucial for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

Government departments should treat the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage as seriously as economic work, effectively incorporate the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage into Huaying City's important agenda, and include it in the city's economic and social development plan. Ensure the proper excavation, rescue, protection, and development of the intangible cultural heritage project "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters," increase financial investment in its inheritance work, and promptly develop and implement targeted and operational local regulations and policies, as well as work plans for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, focusing on inheritors and inheritance groups. This approach will help the inheritance work of the "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" project operate orderly, normatively, scientifically, and harmoniously in a good and sustainable environment.

At the same time, the government should increase policy support, guiding social funds to participate in the inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" through convenient and beneficial policies. Fully leverage the roles of relevant academic institutions, local universities (such as Huaying Vocational and Technical College and Guang'an Vocational and Technical College), enterprises, social organizations, and other parties to jointly carry out promotion and publicity work for the "Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters" project.

5. Conclusion

As the first and only national-level intangible cultural heritage project in Huaying City, the Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters demonstrates its high importance at the national level. Even under such a background, the national-level "intangible heritage" folk sport of Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters still faces many inheritance crises and challenges in its continuation, which is extremely unfavorable for its own development and the construction of an excellent cultural inheritance system for "intangible heritage" folk sports.

Therefore, taking the national-level "intangible heritage" folk sport Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters as a research case, this study elaborates on its prominent inheritance issues in the process of inheritance, such as the loss and generalization of inheritance content, the single inheritance mode, the loss of inheritors, and other objective social influencing factors. Through problem-oriented analysis, strategies are proposed to improve the public's understanding of intangible cultural heritage in a manner that is consistent with local realities; strengthen the construction and improvement of cultural centers and museums; increase attention to inheritors and inheritance groups; and strengthen government department guidance, increasing inheritance investment and policy support. This approach provides protection for the effective promotion of the healthy inheritance of the folk sport Huaying Mountain Sliding Poles to Carry Young Sisters and offers a theoretical reference for the healthy inheritance of related intangible cultural heritage folk sports projects.

References