

Research on the Inheritance Dilemmas and Innovative Paths of the Kaiyang Festival and the Xieyang Festival

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Abstract

As important fishing - culture festivals in the eastern coastal areas of China, the Kaiyang Festival and the Xieyang Festival embody fishermen's reverence for the ocean and their prayers for good fortune. However, in the process of modernization, these traditional festivals face challenges in inheritance. This article conducts field research and literature analysis in Xiangshan, Ningbo, and Daishan, Zhoushan, to explore issues such as funding shortages, a single - organizational model, and a succession gap among young inheritors. It also proposes corresponding innovative approaches, including the integration of culture and tourism, digital dissemination, and community participation, aiming to provide references for the protection and development of traditional fishing culture.

Keywords

Kaiyang Festival; Xieyang Festival; dilemma.

1. Inheritance Status and Problems

The Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals of fishermen are distinctive folk activities in China's coastal regions, widely spread in Xiangshan County and Daishan County of Zhejiang Province, as well as in Rongcheng City, Rizhao City, and Jimo District (formerly Jimo City) of Shandong Province. In Xiangshan, Zhejiang, the fishermen's Kaiyang and Xieyang Festival activities have a long - standing history, dating back over a thousand years according to records. They reached their peak from the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty to the period of the Republic of China. The Kaiyang Festival is usually held around the spring - summer transition when fishing boats are about to set sail. Fishermen hold relevant ceremonies, praying for safety and a bountiful harvest. The Xieyang Festival is celebrated around the summer - autumn transition after the fishing boats return safely, expressing gratitude for the ocean's blessings. These activities include fishermen's sacrificial rituals and traditional folk art performances. They are characterized by diverse sacrificial objects (such as Mazu Niangniang, Chenghuang Laoye, General Wang Pusa, and Emperor Yushi), a wide variety of sacrificial locations (temples, coasts, docks, ports, fishing grounds, etc.), and various sacrificial forms (covering boat - dragon worship, the Kaiyang Festival, the Xieyang Festival, small - sea sacrifices, Taiping Festival, fish - master sacrifices, etc.). Their core purpose is to pray for safe voyages and prosperous fishing.

The Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals of fishermen in Daishan, Zhejiang, mainly center around the sea - sacrifice ceremony, commonly known as "Xie Long Shui Jiu" or "Xing Wen Shu". The ceremony is typically held in local Dragon King palaces, fishing - port docks, or on fishing boats. A shrine dedicated to the Dragon King is set up on - site, with tables and chairs arranged, incense burned, and candles lit. Five types of livestock, including pigs, sheep, and geese, along with fruits and vegetarian offerings, are presented as sacrifices. Fishermen offer libations with devotion and chant prayers. The etiquette is elaborate, and the procedures are rigorous. Historically, the sea - sacrifice in Daishan was divided into official and folk sacrifices, and some fishing villages still preserve this traditional custom. The timing of the activities is often related to the local

fishing - production cycle. For example, relevant celebrations are frequently held during the seasonal fishing moratorium.

The Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals carry the fishermen's original memories and spiritual sustenance. As spiritual activities expressing fishermen's inner wishes, they take sacrifice as the core and have the characteristics of entertaining both the gods and people. They are not only unique traditional folk - activity forms developed by local fishermen in their long - term fishing - production and life but also carry a wealth of important historical and cultural information. They have high academic value for studying the sacrificial history of China's coastal areas and play a significant role in enlivening the cultural life of fishing areas and promoting the prosperity of fishing - culture creation. However, through field visits to Xiangshan in Ningbo and Daishan in Zhoushan, it is evident that under the impact of modernization, the inheritance of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals faces challenges.

1.1. Prominent Problem of Fund Shortage

In the Xiangshan area, the funding sources for the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals are extremely limited, mainly relying on government subsidies and personal donations. According to an interview with Han Sulian, the national - level inheritor of the Kaiyang Festival in this area, the annual national - level subsidy is approximately 50,000 yuan, and the provincial - level subsidy is only 25,000 yuan. However, the actual cost of holding a comprehensive and large - scale festival far exceeds the sum of these subsidies. This forces activity organizers like Han Sulian to use their own money to fill the funding gap, severely restricting the scale and quality improvement of the activities. For instance, during the activity - preparation process, a substantial amount of funds is required for purchasing sacrificial supplies, inviting traditional - art performance teams, and venue decoration, but the limited subsidies cannot meet these needs.

Although the funding investment in Daishan, Zhoushan, is relatively better than that in Xiangshan, with the local government investing over 2 million yuan annually to support the Xieyang Festival, in recent years, as the activity scale continues to expand, the number of participants increases, and the activity content becomes more diverse, the funds remain insufficient. Moreover, the issue of unequal distribution of income from local tourism development is also prominent. Tourism - related income has not effectively contributed to the sustainable development of the festival activities. Some stakeholders have reaped the majority of the benefits, while the proportion of funds allocated to the inheritance and development of the festivals is small, seriously affecting the sustainability of the activities. For example, the construction of some tourism - supporting facilities has consumed a large amount of funds, while there is a shortage of funds for cultivating inheritors, protecting traditional ceremonies, and promoting innovation.

1.2. Single - Organizational Model

The Kaiyang and Xieyang Festival activities in the Xiangshan area mainly rely on the spontaneous organization of inheritors. Taking Han Sulian as an example, as the main initiator, she mainly contacts villagers one by one via phone, appealing for their voluntary participation. This organizational model is highly inefficient and overly dependent on the personal ability and interpersonal relationships of the initiator. Once the initiator has limited energy or encounters unexpected situations, the organization of the activities will be severely affected. Additionally, due to the lack of a professional organizational structure and systematic planning, it is difficult to expand the scale of the activities, and the activity forms are relatively monotonous, unable to fully showcase the rich cultural connotations of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals. For example, in the activity - process arrangement, chaos may occur due to the lack of overall planning, resulting in a significant decline in the activity's effectiveness.

Daishan has adopted an organizational model of "government - led + social participation". The County Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press, and Publication takes the lead, with each village taking turns to host, and professional planning companies are invited to assist. While this model has enhanced the professionalism and standardization of the activities to some extent, it also reveals the problem of excessive government intervention. The government's over - dominance in activity planning and implementation makes it difficult to fully unleash the autonomy and creativity of the public, leading to a gradual decrease in public participation. Villagers are more passive in performing tasks during the activities rather than actively engaging, which is not conducive to the deep - rooted inheritance of traditional festivals among the people. For example, in the design of some ceremony segments, due to the intervention of the government and professional planning companies, it may deviate from the traditional customs of local fishermen, causing the activities to lose their original folk characteristics.

1.3. Succession Gap among Young Inheritors

In both Xiangshan and Daishan, the inheritors of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals generally show an aging trend. Xie Youfang, an inheritor in Xiangshan, is advanced in age and has limited energy, finding it challenging to carry out the inheritance work effectively. The younger generation shows little interest in traditional festivals. According to Han Sulian's description, most of the participants at the activity site are the elderly, and the younger generation is more inclined to work in cities, pursuing a modern urban lifestyle. This has created a succession gap in the inheritance of traditional festivals, making it difficult to fully inherit many traditional techniques and ceremonies. For example, the younger generation lacks enthusiasm for learning some traditional sacrificial dances and ballads, leading to the gradual disappearance of these cultural elements.

Although Daishan has attempted to select inheritors through methods such as "open selection" and "political - task assignments", after the selection, there is a lack of a systematic training mechanism. The newly selected inheritors only receive basic training and find it difficult to deeply understand and master the essence of the ceremonies. This makes it impossible for them to accurately convey the cultural connotations of traditional festivals during the actual inheritance process, greatly reducing the inheritance effect. For example, in the sacrificial ceremony, some new inheritors may make operational mistakes in crucial steps and details due to insufficient understanding, affecting the solemnity and integrity of the entire ceremony.

In the process of inheriting the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals, issues such as fund shortages, a single - organizational model, and a succession gap among young inheritors are intertwined, seriously threatening the survival and development of these two traditional festivals. It is urgent to seek effective solutions.

2. Analysis of the Causes of Inheritance Dilemmas

2.1. Changes in the Cultural Ecology

2.1.1. Impact of Fishery Modernization

In today's era, the process of fishery modernization is accelerating. Traditional fishing methods are gradually being replaced by mechanization. The widespread application of advanced fishing equipment and technology has significantly improved fishing efficiency, bringing about profound changes in fishermen's operation methods and lifestyles. In the past, fishermen relied entirely on manual labor and simple tools for fishing, establishing a close and deep - seated connection with the ocean. The ocean was not only the source of their livelihood but also the carrier of their culture and beliefs. Today, mechanized operations have substantially reduced fishermen's time at sea, making it relatively easier to obtain catches, and their dependence on the ocean has decreased remarkably.

This change in dependence directly impacts the economic foundation of traditional festivals. The Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals were originally ceremonies held by fishermen before going to sea and after returning, praying for safety and expressing gratitude for the ocean's offerings. Their existence was based on fishermen's awe and reliance on the ocean. When this dependence weakens, the spiritual connotations and practical significance of the festivals gradually fade in fishermen's hearts. For example, some young fishermen under the modern fishery - production model believe that the risks of going to sea have been greatly reduced, and they no longer hold the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festival ceremonies as devoutly as their ancestors. They even attach less importance to these traditional festivals than to some modern festivals.

2.1.2. Changes in the Concepts of the Young Generation under the Influence of Urbanization

The rapid development of urbanization has profoundly transformed people's lifestyles and values, and the young generation is particularly affected. Lured by urban life, the young generation yearns for a more convenient and diverse modern lifestyle and pursues fashionable and pluralistic cultural and entertainment activities. In contrast, traditional folk - cultural activities, with their relatively simple forms and traditional contents, struggle to arouse the interest of the young generation.

The traditional - cultural elements contained in the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals lack sufficient appeal to the young generation. Growing up exposed to modern technology and popular culture, they lack in - depth understanding and emotional resonance with the sacrificial ceremonies, folk performances, and other aspects of traditional festivals. For example, in some coastal fishing villages, the young generation is more interested in playing mobile games and watching online videos and has little enthusiasm for participating in the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festival activities. Moreover, urbanization has led to a large - scale migration of young labor to cities. Many young people leave fishing villages to work and live in cities, further weakening the inheritance foundation of traditional festivals among the young population.

2.2. Insufficient Policy Support

2.2.1. Fragmented Capital Investment and Lack of Long - term Planning

The government's investment in supporting the inheritance and development of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals is fragmented and lacks long - term planning. Taking Xiangshan as an example, the activity funds come from multiple different departments, but there is no dedicated special - purpose appropriation. This makes the distribution and use of funds lack systematicity and coherence, resulting in low capital - utilization efficiency. The fund - allocation times, standards, and requirements of different departments vary. Activity organizers need to spend a great deal of energy coordinating relationships when applying for and using funds, increasing management costs. Furthermore, due to the lack of long - term and stable financial support, activity organizers find it difficult to formulate long - term development plans and cannot continuously invest in and improve festival activities, which severely restricts the scale and quality improvement of festival activities.

2.2.2. Emphasis on "Intangible - Cultural - Heritage Application" over Inheritance and Innovation in Cultural - Protection Policies

Currently, cultural - protection policies tend to place more emphasis on "intangible - cultural - heritage application" while neglecting inheritance and innovation to a certain extent. Many local governments invest a large amount of resources and energy in the "intangible - cultural - heritage application" work of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals. After successfully applying for intangible - cultural - heritage status, they fail to promptly shift the focus to subsequent inheritance and innovation. This makes the festival activities gradually become rigid in form,

lacking the innovative vitality to keep up with the times and difficult to attract more people to participate.

When local areas hold the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals, they still adhere to the activity forms and contents from previous years. The sacrificial ceremonies, folk performances, and other segments lack novelty and cannot meet the aesthetic needs of modern audiences. Moreover, in terms of cultural inheritance, there is a lack of effective support and cultivation for inheritors, and a comprehensive inheritance system has not been established, making it difficult to effectively inherit and develop traditional techniques and cultural connotations. This phenomenon of emphasizing "intangible - cultural - heritage application" over inheritance and innovation has caused the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals to gradually lose their attractiveness and vitality in modern society.

2.3. The Double - edged - Sword Effect of Tourism Development

2.3.1. Excessive Commercialization Leading to the Loss of Cultural Connotations

Tourism development has brought significant economic benefits to coastal areas. For example, the homestay industry on Dongmen Island in Xiangshan has thrived under the impetus of tourism, bringing substantial income to local residents. However, excessive tourism development has also had a negative impact on the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals. The most prominent issue is the excessive commercialization of festival activities.

Driven by the tourism market, some local areas, in pursuit of maximum economic benefits, over - package the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals as tourism products, one - sidedly focusing on the ornamental and commercial value of the activities while neglecting their original cultural connotations. The sacrificial ceremonies are simplified or modified, folk performances become mere commercial shows, and traditional - cultural elements are misused or distorted. For example, some merchants add numerous entertainment projects unrelated to traditional culture during the festival activities to attract tourists, causing the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals to gradually devolve into a formalistic performance, losing their sacredness and cultural heritage as traditional fishermen's festivals.

2.3.2. The Influx of Tourists Putting Pressure on the Local Ecology and Folk Environment

With the growing popularity of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals, a large number of tourists are attracted to visit and experience. Although the influx of tourists has promoted the local tourism industry to a certain extent, it has also imposed great pressure on the local ecological and folk environment. Taking the Shatou Scenic Spot as an example, during the festival, the large number of tourists causes traffic congestion, bringing great inconvenience to the travel of local residents. At the same time, the increase in the number of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity of local infrastructure, leading to environmental - sanitation deterioration and damage to the ecological balance. In addition, the behaviors and cultural concepts of tourists have also influenced the local folk environment. Some tourists lack respect and understanding of local traditional customs and may engage in inappropriate behaviors when visiting and participating in festival activities, interfering with the normal life of local residents and disrupting the inheritance atmosphere of traditional folk culture. This damage to the ecological and folk environment not only affects the quality of life of local residents but also poses a threat to the sustainable inheritance of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals.

3. Exploration of Innovative Paths

3.1. Integration of Culture and Tourism to Activate Cultural Values

3.1.1. Develop Characteristic "Festival + Tourism" Products

Deeply explore the cultural connotations of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals and organically integrate them with the tourism industry to create attractive characteristic tourism products. Taking Xiangshan as an example, the local area can design a "Mazu - Culture Experience Tour" route centered around the Mazu culture. Tourists can not only visit the time-honored Mazu Temple, understand the origin and development of Mazu beliefs, and experience its profound cultural heritage but also participate in the sacrificial ceremonies of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals to feel the charm of traditional folk activities. Through immersive experiences such as wearing traditional costumes, offering sacrifices, and joining parades, tourists can gain a deeper understanding of the Mazu culture and enhance their sense of identity and belonging to this traditional culture.

In Daishan, a "Dragon - King - Sacrifice Research Tour" project can be launched based on the Dragon - King - sacrifice culture. Organize tourists to visit the Dragon - King Temple, and invite professional interpreters to introduce the historical origin of the Dragon - King belief, the process, and significance of the sacrificial ceremony, enabling tourists to understand the unique marine culture of Daishan. Meanwhile, set up research - learning courses for tourists to participate in making sacrificial supplies, learning traditional sacrificial etiquette, etc., and deeply experience the connotations of the Dragon - King - sacrifice culture through practical activities. This research - learning tour can not only meet tourists' thirst for knowledge but also cultivate potential audiences for local cultural inheritance.

3.1.2. Create Cultural Tourism Routes

Integrate the rich natural and cultural resources of the local area, and combine the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals with surrounding scenic spots to create cultural tourism routes with regional characteristics. In Xiangshan, with the Fishing Port Ancient City as the core, connect surrounding sacrificial places such as the Mazu Temple and the Fish Master Temple, as well as scenic island areas with beautiful natural scenery. When visiting the Fishing Port Ancient City, tourists can appreciate the ancient fishing town landscape and feel the charm of traditional fishing culture. When visiting the Mazu Temple and the Fish Master Temple, they can learn about the local sea-god beliefs and sacrificial traditions. The scenic island areas allow tourists to enjoy the beautiful sea view and experience the tranquility and comfort of island life. Through such route design, the cultural elements of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals are integrated into the entire tourism process, enhancing the popularity and influence of the festivals and attracting more tourists to experience.

In Daishan, a tourism route themed on the Dragon King sacrifice culture can be created around the Sea - sacrifice Altar. Combine the Sea - sacrifice Altar with surrounding Dragon King palaces and folk villages. Tourists can watch the grand sea - sacrifice ceremony at the Sea - sacrifice Altar and feel its solemn and sacred atmosphere. At the Dragon King palaces, they can learn about the history and features of different Dragon King palaces and deeply explore the Dragon King belief. The folk villages enable tourists to experience the local traditional lifestyle, taste special food, and buy handicrafts. By creating such cultural tourism routes, it can not only enrich tourists' travel experiences but also promote the coordinated development of the local culture and the tourism industry.

3.2. Digital Dissemination to Expand the Audience

3.2.1. Record and Promote Festival Activities through New Media

Give full play to the advantages of new media such as short - video platforms and live - streaming to comprehensively and multi - dimensionally record and promote the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals. During the Xieyang Festival in Daishan, the online live - streaming attracted over one million views, which provides a reference for other regions. Local areas can invite professional new - media teams to carefully film and edit the preparation process, sacrificial ceremonies, folk performances, and other aspects of the festival activities, and produce wonderful short videos to be released on major platforms. Through vivid and interesting images and concise explanations, more audiences can be attracted. At the same time, during the live - streaming process, interactive sessions such as online Q&A and lucky draws can be set up to enhance the audience's sense of participation and enable them to have a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations of the festival activities.

3.2.2. Develop Digital Cultural Products

With the help of modern scientific and technological means, develop a series of digital cultural products to enable young people to participate in and understand traditional festivals more conveniently. For example, develop virtual sacrificial ceremonies. By using virtual reality (VR) technology, users can immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the sacrificial ceremony and understand the process and significance of the sacrifice. Design AR interactive games, integrating the cultural elements of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals into the games. For example, by scanning real - world scenes with AR, virtual characters or tasks related to the festivals will appear, allowing players to learn traditional cultural knowledge while playing the game. These digital cultural products can not only meet young people's needs for technology and entertainment but also spread the culture of traditional festivals in a novel way, stimulating young people's interest in traditional culture.

3.3. Community Participation to Build an Inheritance Network

3.3.1. Establish a "Inheritor + Community" Cooperation Mechanism

Strengthen the cooperation between inheritors and the community, and encourage villagers to actively participate in the planning and organization of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festival activities. The boat - drum team in Xiangshan is composed of fishermen's wives and daughters. This model not only enhances community cohesion but also provides a new way for the inheritance of traditional techniques. Local areas can learn from this experience and establish activity - preparation groups composed of inheritors and community residents. Let community residents participate in all aspects of the activities, such as the preparation of sacrificial ceremonies and the rehearsal of folk performances. In this way, community residents can have a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations of traditional festivals, enhance their sense of identity and responsibility for traditional culture, and thus actively participate in the inheritance work.

3.3.2. Set up Folk Culture Classes

Set up folk culture classes in local schools and incorporate the relevant knowledge of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals into the school education system. Compile specialized teaching materials and lesson plans, and invite inheritors or experts and scholars to schools to explain the historical origins, cultural connotations, sacrificial ceremonies, and other knowledge of traditional festivals to students. At the same time, organize students to participate in practical activities, such as making sacrificial supplies and rehearsing folk performance programs, so that students can experience the charm of traditional culture in practice. Through this method, cultivate teenagers' interest in traditional festivals and their cultural identity, and train reserve talents for the inheritance work.

4. Conclusion

The inheritance and development of the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals need to actively respond to the challenges of modernization on the basis of protecting the core of traditional culture. Through multi - dimensional innovations such as the integration of culture and tourism, digital dissemination, community participation, and policy support, not only can the current inheritance dilemmas be solved, but also new vitality can be injected into traditional fishing culture to achieve its sustainable development. In the future, cross - regional cooperation should be further strengthened to promote the Kaiyang and Xieyang Festivals to become marine - culture brands with international influence.

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