



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



**Experience China's Intangible Cultural Heritages in
Role-playing Games: Comparative Studies between
MMORPG and LARP games**

Yuqiao Liu



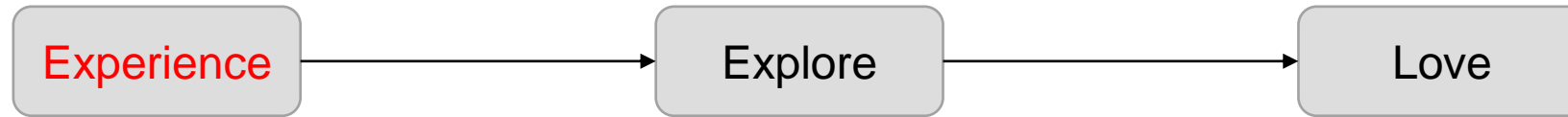
UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Challenges of Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Young people have **limited knowledge** about intangible cultural heritage (Luo,2020).
- **A lack of interest** among young people in giving continuity to heritage practices (Arantes,2009).
- ICH market cannot provide considerable amounts of **money and work** (Pina,2015).



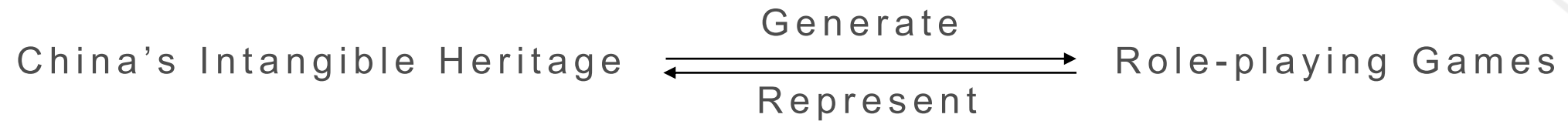
Edutainment as a New Method



Edutainment, in this context, becomes a strategic tool to preserve traditional skills and knowledge while promoting local cultures (Luo,2020).



Connection Between Intangible Heritage and Role-playing Games



- 42 ICH elements inscribed on UNESCO's List
- 1557 nation-level intangible cultural heritage
- ICHs from different ethnic groups
- Government has invested a total of 7.76 billion yuan (About \$1.2 billion) in ICH preservation

- Online Role-playing Games
- Live-action Role-playing Games (LARP)
- Tabletop Role-playing Games (TRPG)
- Hobbyist Historical Reenactment (RH)
- Jubensha



Role-playing as an Intangible Heritage Practice



- Role-playing is an ideal pedagogical method for experiential and active learning (Russell and John 2010)
- Sociologist Hannigan (1998) uses the word "Edutainment" to express his idea of 'joining together of educational and cultural activities with the commerce and technology of the entertainment world.'
- Through participating in role plays exercise, it is considered to be particularly effective for enhancing multicultural understanding (Junn 1994)



Case Studies: Jubensha and MMORPGs



The Secret of Gauze Lantern



Justice Online



A Dream of Jianghu



What is Jubensha

- Jubensha is a kind of live-action role-playing in China.
- A typical Jubensha game usually takes place among a group of 4-12 players and lasts for 3-5 hours each session.
- Most of Jubensha games have the settings and suspects of a murder case.
- The game *Death Wears White* was translated and introduced into China.
- Jubensha has seen explosive growth in its popularity owing to the hit TV show *Who's the Murderer*
- More than 30,000 Jubensha studios and stores in China, expecting to reach 23.89 billion yuan (around \$3.76 billion) by the end of 2022 (Meng 2022).



The Secret of Gauze Lantern

- Designed and supported by the government of Gansu province
- *The Secret of Gauze Lantern* mainly represents one of the most valuable ICH, the Gauze Lantern
- Making the Gauze Lantern is the most important clue that help players to rethink the previous case and find the murder.
- Players can also experience other popular intangible heritage activities, such as pitching-pot game, stilt-walking and paper-cut.



Representation of Intangible Heritages in *Justice Online*



Lantern Riddle



Mooncake Gambling(Bo Bing)



Representation of Intangible Heritages in *A Dream of Jianghu*

Miao Embroidery



- Traditional folk art of Miao People, which are ethnic minorities in southwest China.
- Players an opportunity to experience and understand the remarkable intangible techniques.
- Players are recommended to learn more about this technique through documentary videos on game website



Conclusion

- MMORPG games in China consider intangible heritage as a uniform concept and contain various ICH elements from different areas of China.
- Jubensha, as a Chinese edition LARP game, focuses more on an in-depth introduction to the intangible traditions and crafts in a local area and teaches participants the indigenous traditional skills hand by hand through playing.
- MMORPG games portray the intangible cultural heritage of minority groups, but it is hard to find cultural and historical elements of minority ethnicities in Jubensha game.



Thanks For Listening!

Yuqiao.liu.1633@student.uu.se



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET