

# On the Protection Strategy of Jingdezhen Ceramic Intangible Cultural Heritage

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**Abstract:** Intangible cultural heritage is the “cultural gene” of a nation. The ceramic intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen, which condenses science and technology, culture and economy, has a typical meaning. However, there are still many problems and deficiencies in the protection of Jingdezhen ceramic intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the government should take reasonable strategies to improve the problem and protect the heritage in a better way.

**Keywords:** Intangible cultural heritage; Protection; Strategies

## 1. Introduction

Material cultural heritage, also known as “tangible cultural heritage”, mainly focuses on the physical material forms created by people. Intangible cultural heritage is regarded as various practices, performances, expressions, knowledge systems and skills, related tools, objects, crafts and cultural venues of cultural heritage by various community groups, sometimes for individuals. Intangible cultural heritage is the spiritual vegetation and soul roots of each nation, and it is also an important cultural treasure, in addition to material cultural heritage. Therefore, it is an important part of China’s traditional culture and the wisdom of working people. Jingdezhen, as a thousand-year-old porcelain capital, has a long history of ceramics, profound cultural heritage, and rich cultural and intangible cultural heritage. The craftsmanship of ceramics condenses science and technology, art, culture and economy, and has been included in the Second Intangible Cultural Heritage List in Jiangxi Province. Therefore, it is of great significance to take necessary strategies to protect and develop ceramic intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen.

## 2. Brief Introduction of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Movement is an action initiated by UNESCO. In 1997, UNESCO launched the “Declaration of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” project, and announced the first batch of 19 representative works in 2001. In 2005, the General Office of the State Council issued Opinions on Strengthening the Work of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In June of the same year, the Ministry of Culture launched a large-scale general survey of intangible cultural heritage, and gained a preliminary understanding and grasp of the status of China’s intangible cultural heritage. The main

body of the intangible cultural heritage is the national and folk traditional culture, which is the spiritual and emotional support of the Chinese nation. With the challenges brought about by economic globalization and modernization, the traditional Chinese folk culture is facing the doom of destruction and disappearance. Rescue and protection of the intangible cultural heritage has become the top priority of national cultural construction.

## 3. Ceramic Intangible Cultural Heritage of Jingdezhen

According to the existing archeology, the history of porcelain making in Jingdezhen began in the late Tang Dynasty and became prosperous in the Song and Yuan dynasties. With the establishment of the Royal Kiln Factory and the prosperity of ceramics foreign trade during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Jingdezhen gradually became the center of porcelain making in China and enjoyed the good reputation of “ceramic capital”. The ceramic works burned by the folk ceramics crafts in Jingdezhen are exquisite in shape, attractive in the color of glaze and unique in the pattern printing. The modeling and the decoration has a unique artistic flavor, thus wins the favor of both the noble and ordinary people. Jingdezhen has created and inherited the brilliant ceramic intangible cultural heritage for thousands of years.

The handicrafts represented by Jingdezhen ceramics are also unique in the intangible cultural heritage. Not only does it have the characteristics of “intangible cultural heritage”, but it also has the characteristics of the “material cultural heritage”. The existence and disappearance of skills often depends on the inheritance of the inheritors, at the same time, the manifestation of technology can not be separated from the physical existence of utensils, kiln sites and workshops. Jingdezhen’s folk ceramic crafts are still passed down by oral tradition. The transmission of craftsmanship often depends on the situation of inheritors.

Due to the complexity of the manufacturing process, those folk ceramics crafts such as sharpening edges, blanks forming, and glazing have their own methods; printing, painting, and carving have their own skills are mainly transmitted by the living form of “oral teaching” between masters and apprentices. Many heritage of the traditional folk handicrafts in Jingdezhen takes people as the carrier, takes inheritors as the main body, takes non-physical, non-static memory and skills as the core. The art ceramics craftsmanship of Jingdezhen, from glaze preparation and methods, shaping blanks, perfecting blanks, painting blanks, glazing, burning and decorating processes, etc., reflects the wisdom sparks of Jingdezhen folk pottery, and the pottery craftsmanship carries ceramic manufacturing people’s cultural tradition which is passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the formation process of ceramic handicrafts contains many intangible cultural heritage.

#### **4. Problems in the Protection of Jingdezhen Ceramic Intangible Cultural Heritage**

With the fast development of economy, more and more people begin to pay attention to the protection of ceramic intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen. However, there are still a lot of problems in the protection work, which needs improvement and enhancement.

##### **4.1. Weak awareness of ceramic intangible cultural heritage protection**

Like many forms of intangible cultural heritage, most ceramic skills are passed on orally instead of literally, thus often fleeting and become non-renewable. Once these intangible cultural heritage is lost or perished, they are basically unable to recover. While the folk artists’ awareness on the protection of intangible cultural heritage is very weak, as time goes by, some ceramic intangible cultural heritage that rely on oral or behavioral inheritance in China is continuously disappearing, and many traditional folk skills are also on the verge of extinction. Precious objects or materials of cultural value or historical value are either destroyed or lost to foreign countries. Due to the excessive emphasis on economic and social benefits, some institutions have replaced the “protection of cultural heritage” with “protection of cultural relics”, and even excessive commercial development or arbitrary abuse of intangible cultural heritage has occurred.

##### **4.2. The confusion of the protection subject and inheritance subject**

In the composition of intangible cultural heritage, the subjects of inheritance and protection are completely different. The subjects of inheritance are mainly the heritage inheritors while the subjects of protection are mainly local government, social organizations, the media and other aspects. Differences in functions, composition, and

relationships determine their different roles. The main body of inheritance is responsible for inheriting traditional ceramic skills, while the main body of protection is responsible for propagating, promoting and spreading ceramic culture. At present, the subject of protection of intangible cultural heritage often messes up the functional difference between the subject of protection and inheritance, and stubbornly adds the current official culture, popular culture and other foreign cultures to the ceramic intangible cultural heritage, which makes folk customs be replaced by official customs. This “adaptation style” will destroy the life genes of ceramic intangible cultural heritage, and will also cause the confusion of the relationship between the inheritor and protector of ceramic intangible cultural heritage.

##### **4.3. Lack of cultivation of intangible cultural heritage inheritors**

Oral inheritance is still the main way of surviving folk porcelain and intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen. The process of inheritance is an interactive “living” process in which the inheritors and the objects of the inheritance participate together. The content of the inheritance is the developing “living” national wisdom, psychological demands, and values. Inheritors are important passers and bearers of Jingdezhen folk ceramic art, they have mastered and carried the knowledge and skills of Jingdezhen folk ceramic art. Therefore, protecting and cultivating inheritors is the key to the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

The particularity of intangible cultural inheritance leads to the lack of successors, and the successors’ cultivation lack scale, standardization and systematization, which makes some unique intangible cultural heritage transmission difficult. Many folk ceramic artists do not want to share their exclusive secrets or recipes, often resulting in a lack of follow-up talent, and even the danger of losing stunts. Therefore, it is particularly important to strengthen the cultivation of follow-up talents and build the ceramic talents echelon in Jingdezhen. The government should try the best to protect their intellectual property rights, select outstanding inheritors from their family or apprentices and give them generous subsidies to form a talent guarantee for intangible cultural heritage.

##### **4.4. The administration of local intangible cultural heritage is not sound**

In terms of local intangible cultural heritage, due to the influence of factors such as lack of funds and personnel, the departments of grassroots intangible cultural heritage protection functions often suffer from problems such as inadequate organizational structures, lack of personnel, and lack of expert talents. The existing theoretical and practical research on the protection of ceramic intangible cultural heritage is insufficient, which leads professional

organizations to lack market awareness and related policy conditions for standardized management, reasonable development and utilization. Consequently, it is difficult to form a normalized scale for protection, making the intangible cultural heritage lose its development potential and growth markets.

## **5. The Protection Strategy of the Ceramic Intangible Cultural Heritage in Jingdezhen**

Facing all the problems in the protection of the ceramic intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen, the government should play their important role in the protection and coordinate all the work of different departments to improve the situation.

### **5.1. Confirming government leadership and strengthening organizational management**

On March 26, 2005, the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Opinions fully recognized the importance and urgency of protecting China's intangible cultural heritage. The working principle of protection is: government-led, social participation, clear responsibilities and joint forces; long-term planning, step-by-step implementation, point-by-point integration and practical results.

Today, with the rapid development of science and technology, we must protect the traditional handicrafts in a better way, so it is necessary to implement the guidelines of "rescue first, protection-oriented, reasonable use, inheritance and development". Also, it is significant to promote and publicize intangible cultural heritage as one of the urban characteristics of Jingdezhen. The government should set up special funds, introduce related preferential policies and establish special authorities to promote inheritance. At the same time, the government should also establish a special administration department, implementing planned management, establishing management system, and encourage special funds and multi-channel funding.

### **5.2. Increasing publicity and awareness of protection**

Intangible cultural heritage is a symbol of civilization. It is important to attach importance to the historical and cultural value of intangible cultural heritage itself, and vigorously promote the importance and urgency of intangible cultural heritage protection. On the one hand, in order to improve the public's awareness and responsibility for the protection of intangible heritage, it can be specifically publicized through various media tools. On the other hand, cultural creativity products, such as handmade products, artwork, and commodities, materializes the concept of abstract intangible cultural heritage, forms a kind of feature and promotes it to the whole society,

thereby improving people's awareness of intangible cultural heritage production.

### **5.3. Attaching importance to inheritors and cultivating successors**

For inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, it is important to give them necessary financial support to prevent the disappearance of inherited talents. Also, it is significant to strive to create the human environment of intangible cultural heritage, thereby encouraging more people learn relevant knowledge.

The government should do some more work to protect inheritors and ceramic talents. First, the government can use the newspaper, internet, magazine and some other forms to establish a living protection system. Also, the government should pay attention to the selection of technicians and old artists, publicize the superb ceramic handicraft skills vigorously and spread related knowledge of ceramic handicrafts. Last but not least, the government should pay attention to achievements in innovation, encourage and support old and new ceramic artisans who have unique skills to apply for intangible cultural heritage, thus creating an atmosphere of respecting and protecting ceramic craftsman.

### **5.4. Giving full play to the resource advantages of local universities**

There are many colleges and universities in the city of Jingdezhen, so it is advisable to play the academic research advantages of universities make full use of the scientific research resources of each university and carry out innovative research on the theory and methods of ceramic intangible cultural heritage protection. Local universities should clarify the conceptual factors of ceramic intangible cultural heritage, conduct scientific, reasonable classification and research on ceramic intangible cultural heritage and form a systematic theoretical system and research methods, thus laying a good theoretical foundation for the protection of ceramic intangible cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage is an intangible but living cultural heritage. It is the national memory and cultural genes, witnessing the wisdom and spirit of a nation. Intangible cultural heritage is not only a witness to the development of human society, but it is also a valuable and precious cultural resource. The protection of intangible cultural heritage is related to the harmonious development of society, the heritage of national culture and the cultural security of a country. Consequently, it is of great significance to fully protect and make good use of the intangible cultural heritage. Through the development of a millennium, Jingdezhen has formed a unique ceramic intangible cultural heritage. Porcelain-making industry in Jingdezhen occupies an extremely important position both in Chinese ceramic history and the world ceramic

history. With the change of the times, protecting and inheriting the intangible cultural heritage of Jingdezhen is an important historical mission, it will provide new texts and perspectives for the study of material cultural heritage.

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