

Protection and Inheritance of Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hubei Province: A Case Study of Hong'an Dabu

Zhijie Wu¹ Kunlun Zhao² Yujie Ye³ Ling Liao⁴ Zhijie He⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan, China

¹Corresponding author.

ABSTRACT

As a representative of traditional textile intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Hubei Province, Hong'an Dabu holds significant cultural and economic value. However, under the dual pressures of modern industrialization and market competition, Hong'an Dabu faces multiple challenges, including skill inheritance gaps, insufficient market competitiveness, and limited policy support. This study focuses on Hong'an Dabu as a research object, systematically reviewing its current protection and inheritance practices. It further analyzes the challenges and opportunities in market-oriented operations, brand development, and educational promotion. By integrating modern design concepts, new media communication technologies, and collaborative cultural ecosystems, this paper proposes strategies for policy support, publicity and promotion, market-oriented development, and educational inheritance. The aim is to provide theoretical references and practical pathways for the sustainable development of textile ICH in Hubei Province, while promoting deeper integration of ICH into modern society and offering insights for the inheritance and development of China's intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Hong'an Dabujie, Textile intangible cultural heritage, Protection and inheritance, Market-oriented development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of China's social economy and the rise of the textile industry in countries and regions along the Belt and Road Initiative, the demand for the development of China's textile industry has become increasingly urgent. Currently, China is at a critical stage of transforming from a global textile manufacturing power to a textile powerhouse. The development of the textile industry requires technological innovation as the driving force and product quality as the core, raising higher demands for industrial transformation and upgrading. Against this backdrop, the protection and inheritance of traditional textile ICH, as an important intersection of culture and industry, have become increasingly significant.

However, during the rapid development of the textile industry, traditional textile ICH faces multiple challenges, such as the loss of craftsmanship, inheritance gaps, and insufficient

market competitiveness. These challenges are further exacerbated by low awareness among younger generations, intensifying the difficulties of ICH protection and inheritance. Lu Xingren (2024), through an questionnaire survey on the awareness of Hubei Province's embroidery ICH projects among young people, found that only 14.7% of respondents were aware of the national ICH project "Hong'an Embroidery." Since "Hong'an Embroidery" and "Hong'an Dabu" are often jointly promoted in Hong'an County's ICH publicity and education, it can be inferred that young people's awareness of "Hong'an Dabujie" is also relatively low. This phenomenon not only highlights the need to improve the dissemination of ICH projects among young people in Hong'an but also reflects the practical difficulties of ICH protection and inheritance in the context of modernization.

To address these issues, this paper takes the national ICH project "Hong'an Dabu" in Hubei Province as the research object, exploring mechanisms for the protection and inheritance of

textile ICH. By reviewing domestic studies on the protection and inheritance of textile ICH and analyzing the current challenges faced by Hong'an Dabu, this paper proposes corresponding protection strategies and optimization paths. The study aims to provide theoretical support and practical references for the sustainable development of textile ICH in Hubei Province, further promoting the integration of ICH into modern society and offering insights for the inheritance and development of China's intangible cultural heritage.

2. RESEARCH STATUS OF TEXTILE ICH PROTECTION AND INHERITANCE

In recent years, scholars have explored the value and protection strategies of textile ICH from multiple dimensions, resulting in a wealth of research findings. Cui Yan (2024) analyzed the ICH value of the Tujia brocade "Xilankapu" from cultural, economic, aesthetic, and educational perspectives, highlighting its unique craftsmanship and cultural significance but noting that insufficient dissemination has hindered its broader recognition. Ma Liyao (2024) emphasized the contemporary value of ICH and advocated for the stratified development of complex craftsmanship to reduce production costs and cycles, thereby expanding the practitioner and consumer base and enhancing the social impact of ICH. These studies demonstrate that the value of textile ICH lies not only in its historical and cultural significance but also in its realization of contemporary relevance through modernization.

In terms of innovative inheritance, scholars have proposed various pathways to promote the sustainable development of textile ICH. Lu Xingren (2024) conducted a SWOT analysis of the inheritance of Hubei Province's Han Embroidery, identifying challenges such as insufficient publicity, generational gaps among inheritors, and high production costs, while suggesting opportunities in industrial integration and expanding overseas markets. Wang Zhiwei (2023) proposed designing cultural and creative products that align with contemporary aesthetics to transform traditional craftsmanship into economic value, achieving the transition from "finger-tip skills" to "finger-tip economy." Ye Xiangyu (2023) explored the role of standardization in promoting high-quality development and ICH protection in Zhejiang's textile industry, providing a pathway for

industrialization and standardization of ICH inheritance.

Furthermore, new media technologies and digital communication are regarded as key drivers for the protection of textile ICH. Guo Zilong (2023) argued that digital communication can overcome spatial and temporal limitations, attracting broader participation and interaction. Li Min (2022) suggested leveraging the media convergence era by utilizing live-streaming and other new media platforms to expand the dissemination of textile ICH. Additionally, constructing cultural ecological communities can foster collaborative governance among governments, media, and enterprises, ensuring the sustainable inheritance of ICH. Li Chunxiao (2021), based on a Baidu Index analysis of public attention to textile ICH, found that attention fluctuates due to factors such as folk activities, tourism seasons, and significant events. Accordingly, targeted communication strategies were proposed, providing valuable insights into enhancing public awareness and modern dissemination of textile ICH.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF HONG'AN DABU PROTECTION AND INHERITANCE

3.1 Establishment as a Provincial ICH and National Geographical Indication

Hong'an Dabu was successfully included in the Hubei Provincial ICH list in 2010, highlighting its significance in cultural transmission and protection. Building on this foundation, the application process for its national geographical indication began in 2013. In 2014, Hong'an Dabu was officially recognized as a national geographical indication product, marking the first national-level recognition of its traditional craftsmanship. This recognition not only underscored its cultural value but also provided critical support for its protection and inheritance in the modern economic context, promoting the integration of traditional craftsmanship with modern industries and injecting new vitality into local economic development.

3.2 Primary Modes of Inheritance and Protection

Hong'an Dabu adopts an innovative "farmer-cooperative-market" model, which has proven to be a viable pathway for its inheritance and industrialization. This model provides high-quality

cotton materials to farmers, reducing production costs, while cooperatives purchase handwoven fabrics and market them through various channels to reach broader consumer bases. This approach has effectively integrated decentralized production resources, improving production efficiency and circulation while fostering the large-scale development of traditional craftsmanship. Additionally, this model has increased local farmers' incomes, particularly by offering flexible employment opportunities for rural women, contributing to the sustainable development of the local economy. However, challenges such as high production costs, price disadvantages in market competition, and labor shortages persist, necessitating further optimization of this model.

4. CHALLENGES IN THE INHERITANCE AND PROTECTION OF HONG'AN DABUJIE

4.1 Market Competition Pressure

Under the impact of modern industrial production, Hong'an Dabu faces significant challenges from both market competition and rising costs. On one hand, machine-made fabrics, with their low cost and high efficiency, dominate the market, severely squeezing the survival space of handwoven Dabu. Additionally, a large number of counterfeit machine-made fabrics, falsely marketed as Hong'an Dabu, are sold at low prices. These products lack the craftsmanship and cultural value of authentic Dabu, leading to consumer confusion and further damaging its market reputation. On the other hand, the continuous rise in raw material prices and high labor costs pose substantial threats to the sustainable development of traditional craftsmanship. The decline of the local cotton farming industry in Hong'an County has made it difficult to meet production demands, forcing reliance on external suppliers, which significantly increases production costs. Moreover, the complex and time-consuming production process of handwoven Dabu results in low efficiency, with artisans earning far less than those in other labor-intensive professions. Consequently, labor shortages have intensified, and the inheritance of this traditional craft faces severe disruption.

4.2 Generational Gaps in Inheritance

The accelerated pace of modernization has exacerbated the generational gap in the inheritance

of traditional crafts. Young people are increasingly disinterested in traditional handcrafts, leading to a lack of successors and putting many skills at risk of extinction. This phenomenon is closely tied to changes in social environments and the economic appeal of traditional crafts. Modern youth, influenced by fast-paced lifestyles and consumer culture, tend to prefer high-paying and stable careers, while traditional crafts, with their long learning cycles, high labor intensity, and low economic returns, fail to attract them. Furthermore, the cultural and historical significance of traditional crafts often fails to resonate with younger generations, further diminishing their interest. Additionally, the education system's limited emphasis on traditional culture and craftsmanship prevents young people from gaining exposure to or understanding these skills. The aging population of current artisans exacerbates the problem, placing many valuable cultural heritages at risk of irreversible loss.

4.3 Insufficient Policy Support

A lack of effective policy support or its inadequate implementation is a major bottleneck in the sustainable development of traditional crafts. Taking Hong'an Dabu as an example, despite repeated attempts by its inheritors to apply for government subsidies to address high production costs and market promotion challenges, funding has often fallen short of expectations due to difficulties in allocation and implementation. This lack of policy support is evident not only in financial aspects but also in the execution and oversight of policies. First, existing ICH protection policies are often broad and lack targeted support for specific projects, particularly in terms of resource allocation and efficiency. Second, local governments often lack sufficient resources to provide sustained support for inheritors, leaving many ICH projects struggling to survive. Finally, inadequate promotion and enforcement of policies mean that many inheritors and practitioners are unclear about how to access available support, further diminishing the effectiveness of existing policies.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION AND INHERITANCE OF TEXTILE ICH IN HUBEI PROVINCE

5.1 Policy Support

In the process of protecting and inheriting Hong'an Dabu, the proliferation of counterfeit products not only disrupts market order but also severely damages the reputation and cultural value of traditional craftsmanship. To address this issue, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive intellectual property protection system and strengthen the management of national geographical indication trademarks. A full-chain regulatory mechanism, spanning from production to sales, should be implemented to enhance the crackdown on counterfeit products. Additionally, the government should allocate special funds to support skill training and product innovation for inheritors. Skill training can be conducted through the establishment of ICH transmission bases or cooperatives to cultivate young artisans and mitigate the generational gap in inheritance. Product innovation, on the other hand, should integrate modern design concepts and consumer preferences to develop diversified Hong'an Dabu derivative products, expanding its applications in home decor, fashion, and cultural creative industries. By combining legal protection and financial support, it is possible to not only curb the erosion of counterfeit products but also enhance Hong'an Dabu's market competitiveness, ensuring its sustainable development in the modern era.

5.2 Publicity and Promotion

Publicity and promotion play a critical role in enhancing the social recognition and market influence of Hong'an Dabu. Given the insufficient awareness of traditional culture among younger generations, leveraging new media platforms such as short videos and live streaming for innovative promotion has become essential. Through engaging content and interactive formats, the weaving techniques, historical origins, and cultural significance of Hong'an Dabu can be vividly showcased, bridging the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern consumers. Furthermore, the rapid dissemination and wide reach of new media can elevate Hong'an Dabu from a local cultural asset to a national and even international market presence, attracting a broader consumer base. Hosting themed exhibitions and cultural

festivals is another effective way to increase public awareness. By showcasing its historical evolution, craftsmanship, and artistic value, such events allow audiences to experience its unique charm firsthand. Moreover, linking these events with other ICH projects can create a larger cultural dissemination effect. To further enhance promotional outcomes, the government and related institutions should strengthen collaborations with universities, enterprises, and media platforms to build a branded publicity system. This would position Hong'an Dabu not only as a representative of traditional craftsmanship but also as a cultural symbol embodying local heritage and national identity, fostering its inheritance and innovation in the modern era.

5.3 Market-Oriented Development

Integrating modern design concepts to develop diversified products is a key pathway for expanding market space and enhancing competitiveness in the protection and inheritance of Hong'an Dabu. By combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design, Hong'an Dabu can gain greater utility and aesthetic value, transitioning from traditional textiles to modern lifestyle products. For example, developing regionally distinctive home decor items such as cushions, curtains, and tablecloths can preserve traditional patterns while meeting the aesthetic demands of modern consumers. Similarly, designing fashionable clothing, bags, and cultural creative products can attract younger consumer groups and create culturally rich trendsetting items. Additionally, establishing a brand certification system is crucial for enhancing market competitiveness. By formulating strict production standards and quality certification mechanisms, it becomes possible to effectively distinguish handwoven Dabu from machine-made imitations, safeguarding the uniqueness of traditional craftsmanship and reinforcing market trust. A robust brand certification system not only strengthens consumer confidence in Hong'an Dabu but also elevates its brand image and product value. The dual strategy of modern design and brand development injects innovative momentum into Hong'an Dabu, providing a solid foundation for its presence in the global consumer market and achieving the creative transformation and sustainable development of traditional culture.

5.4 Education and Transmission

Education and practice integration offer dual pathways for the protection and inheritance of Hong'an Dabu through the establishment of ICH-related courses in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, as well as the creation of ICH transmission bases. Educational outreach can inspire younger generations to engage with traditional culture by incorporating classroom teaching and hands-on activities that deepen their understanding of the history and craftsmanship of Hong'an Dabu, fostering cultural identity and transmission awareness. Meanwhile, transmission bases provide platforms for artisans to showcase and teach their skills, while also promoting social participation and advancing academic research. These initiatives create essential bridges for the sustainable development of Hong'an Dabu. This education-and-practice-focused approach not only addresses the generational gap in inheritance but also injects new vitality into the innovation and dissemination of Hong'an Dabu in the contemporary era.

6. CONCLUSION

As a significant representative of textile intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Hubei Province, Hong'an Dabu carries the mission of preserving traditional culture while facing multiple challenges in the context of modernization. This study analyzes its current state of inheritance and the difficulties it encounters, highlighting key issues such as market competition pressures, generational gaps among inheritors, and insufficient policy support. These challenges reflect the broader crisis faced by traditional craftsmanship under the impacts of industrialization and consumer culture. To address these issues, this paper proposes a sustainable development pathway that integrates policy support, innovative dissemination, market transformation, and educational inheritance. The case of Hong'an Dabu demonstrates that the protection of ICH requires not only preserving cultural roots but also achieving an organic integration of tradition and modernity through multi-stakeholder collaboration. This approach can revitalize its intrinsic vitality and provide a valuable "Hubei experience" for the creative transformation of textile ICH.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project Funding: Special Grant from the Wuhan Textile University Institutional Fund.

REFERENCES

- [1] An Ni. On the Resource Integration of Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage [J]. *Silk*, 2015, 52(10): 56-62.
- [2] Cui Yan. Research and Analysis: The ICH Value of Xilankapu [J]. *Silk*, 2024(09): 136-140.
- [3] Fang Yun. Folklore Museum Narratives in the Context of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection: A Case Study of Shanghai Homespun Museum Clusters [J]. *Southeast Culture*, 2020(05): 180-185.
- [4] Guo Zilong, Song Yixiang. Digital Communication of Traditional Apparel Culture from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage [J]. *Cotton Textile Technology*, 2023, 51(12): 108.
- [5] Jiang Hong, Cao Mingfu. Research on Subsidy Methods for the Productive Protection of Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage in China: Based on Externalities and Information Asymmetry [J]. *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 2018, 38(06): 21-25.
- [6] Li Chunxiao, Wang Yanzhen. Spatiotemporal Characteristics of Public Attention and Communication Strategies for Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage: An Empirical Study Based on Baidu Index [J]. *Silk*, 2021, 58(01): 52-58.
- [7] Li Min, Wu Siyu. Thoughts on the Inheritance of Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Development of Tourism Souvenirs [J]. *Cotton Textile Technology*, 2023, 50(06): 86.
- [8] Lu Xingren, Gao Hui. Current Status and Innovative Development Pathways for the Inheritance of Han Embroidery as a Textile Intangible Cultural Heritage [J]. *Silk*, 2024, 61(02): 19-30.
- [9] Ma Liyao, Feng Liying. Contemporary Value and Living Inheritance of the Li Dragon Quilt [J]. *Silk*, 2024(03): 98-101, 356-364.

- [10] Ye Xiangyu, Liu Furong, et al. Reflections and Practices on Group Standards Leading the High-Quality Development of Zhejiang's Modern Textile Industry [J]. Modern Textile Technology, 2023, 31(06): 110-116.
- [11] Wang Zhiwei, Li Yang, Liu Chaosong. Cultural and Creative Product Design for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Handicraft of Zhaojue Yi Wool Textiles and Felting [J]. Packaging Engineering, 2023(16): 356-364.