

A Study on the Current Situation of the Protection and Inheritance of Jingdezhen Ceramic Handmaking Skills from the Perspective of the Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Keywords: Jingdezhen, Ceramic Handmaking Skills, Inheritance and Protection, Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Abstract: Inheritors of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills bear the responsibility of carrying forward such intangible cultural heritage. At present, most of the researches on Jingdezhen porcelain craftsmanship focus on the problems and countermeasures of Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage inheritance from a holistic perspective, for example, Integration of Culture and Tourism, protection methods, and other aspects. While the studies that focus on inheritors are rare, Moreover, the research mainly focuses on oral history and questionnaire surveys, which are not in-depth enough. From the perspective of inheritors, conducting targeted interviews with inheritors from various aspects such as the innovation of skills, difficulties faced by inheritors, and integration with the market can provide a deeper understanding of the current protection status of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills, and propose strategies for the protection and inheritance of ceramic handmaking skills better. We interviewed more than 10 inheritors of ceramic at provincial and municipal level, listened their difficulties in heritage inheritance and advices for it. In this paper, we collected and analysed these difficulties and advices, and offered some proposals from the perspective of these inheritors based on in-depth understanding of the current situation of the inheritance and protection of ceramic handmaking skills, so as to promote the skills.

1. Introduction

The development of porcelain has gone through a process from low level to high level, leaving a large number of material and intangible cultural heritages in the continuous development, giving people valuable material and spiritual wealth [1].The protection and inheritance of Jingdezhen ceramic culture are in full swing. Although tremendous achievements have been made in this regard, it is necessary to recognize the necessity and urgency of protecting and inheriting Jingdezhen ceramic culture and recognize its important significance for Jingdezhen, China and even the world [2].

In July 2019, the State Council approved the Implementation Plan for the Jingdezhen National Ceramic Culture Inheritance and Innovation Pilot Zone, which clarified the development

positioning of the national pilot zone as "two places and one center", that is, to build a national ceramic culture protection and inheritance innovation base, a world-renowned ceramic culture tourism destination, and an international trading center for ceramic culture exchange and cooperation.

The porcelain handmaking technique is a representative of Jingdezhen's ceramic culture and has been listed as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage. It is of great significance to explore how to protect and inherit Jingdezhen porcelain handmaking techniques in the new era. At present, most of the researches on Jingdezhen porcelain craftsmanship focus on the problems and countermeasures of Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage inheritance from a holistic perspective, while the studies that focus on inheritors are rare. However, understanding of the inheritors' status plays an important role in protecting and innovating porcelain craftsmanship.

2. The Identification and Dilemma of Inheritors of Jingdezhen Ceramic Handmaking Skills

2.1 The Identification of Inheritors of Jingdezhen Ceramic Handmaking Skills

On May 20, 2006, Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills were included in the first batch of traditional skills in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List. As of now, there are 1899 inheritors of Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage, More than 90% of the inheritors are engaged in the inheritance of ceramic handmaking skills] [3]. In the past, mainly based on relevant regulations and requirements of the Jingdezhen National Ceramic Culture Inheritance and Innovation Pilot Zone. The Jingdezhen Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism carried out the application and recommendation of representative inheritors of municipal intangible cultural heritage projects. Starting from September 2023, the application work is carried out by the Jingdezhen Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Association in accordance with relevant regulations. The recognition of provincial inheritors and national inheritors is based on the application of their superiors.

In 2020, the Jingdezhen Municipal Government organized experts to systematically sort out the content of Jingdezhen's ceramic handmaking skills and the experts classified the items of relevant skills. This is a comprehensive summary of the ceramic handmaking skills in Jingdezhen, and it also plays a huge role in improving the structure of the Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills system and forming a unique inheritor group system. In February 2021, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Jiangxi Province organized experts to discuss the Setting of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills. In the end, The experts agreed to divide Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills into four categories (Raw Material Moulding, Moulding Technology, decorative technology, and firing technology), 18 categories, and 237 sub items.

2.2 The Dilemma of Inheritors of Jingdezhen Ceramic Handmaking Skills

Jingdezhen has a large number of group of ceramic handmaking skills, and the process of ceramic handmaking skills is complex. Song Yingxing, The Scientist of Ming Dynasty, wrote in his book "Tiangong Kaiwu" that the ceramic handmaking skills, "making a porcelain cup requires 72 steps to complete, many of them have not been taken into account in the details"[4]. Jingdezhen's ceramic handmaking skills has so many processes, from clocking, drawing, to firing into finished products, which requires collective cooperation, and the inheritor of intangible cultural heritage cannot independently complete a ceramic work. Ma Yichao (2022) pointed out that "Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills Handicrafts rely on group collaboration, no artisan can independently complete their work. intangible cultural heritage projects and representative inheritors under intangible cultural heritage projects cannot represent Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills (all

work) [5]. Under such a technical system and the current rules for identifying representative inheritors, the identification of representative inheritors in Jingdezhen faces multiple challenges. In addition to issues related to identification, the current inheritors of intangible cultural heritage face problems such as weak social inheritance, lack of craftsmanship spirit, and the need for innovative ways of promoting personal works.

3. Interviews of the Inheritors of Jingdezhen Handmaking Ceramic Skills

3.1 Background of the Interviews

At present, research on the protection of Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage ceramic handmaking skills is mostly analyzed and discussed from the perspectives of the government, scenic spots, and communities. For example, Shuo Wan (2023) analyzed the specific reasons for the infringement and proposes effective protection strategies to improve the intellectual property protection system of Jingdezhen ceramics [6]. Shun Rao (2022) Took The ink color technique (one of the important carriers and expression forms of Chinese ceramic Culture) as an Example, discussed the importance of the living inheritance and development of this technique in the “post-heritage application period” [7]. Yuchen Li (2020) considered the rise of the cultural and creative industries has given the ancient intangible cultural heritage new vitality, and opens up new ways for the protection and inheritance of ceramic intangible heritage in the new era [8]. Lisha Yang (2022) said by analyzing the current situation of Jingdezhen ceramic heritage protection and construction, Jingdezhen realized the integration of ceramic information, and actively promoted the informatization and standardization of ceramic heritage protection [9].

But few studies focus on the inheritors. Only simple questionnaire surveys is written by researchers which is not deep enough and one of the content is also not accurate enough. For example, Yuting Zhu (2023) made the following content on the classification of inheritors which is shown in Table 1 [10]:

Table 1: The situation of inheritors of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills

Level	National inheritors	Provincial inheritors	Municipal inheritors
Number of persons	11 persons	53 persons	1899 persons
Proportions	0.60%	2.70%	96.70%

But the above data statistics are incorrect, with 119 provincial-level inheritors instead of 53. Therefore, the table should include the following content which is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: The situation of inheritors of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills

Level	National inheritors	Provincial inheritors	Municipal inheritors
Number of persons	11 persons	119 persons	1769 persons
Proportions	0.58%	6.27%	93.15%

Making mistakes in identifying the data of inheritors is a major issue in current research. The inheritors of intangible cultural heritage are the main body of inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage. The inheritors of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills represent a profound ceramic culture, mastering the knowledge, skills, and technology of ceramic culture, and have recognized representativeness, authority, and influence. Therefore, conducting interviews with the inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills and understanding their inheritance status plays an important role in protecting and innovating ceramic handmaking skills.

3.2 The Purpose and Significance of the Interviews

This study conducted interviews with intangible cultural heritage inheritors of Jingdezhen ceramic handmaking skills through typical case sampling. According to Yuanxin Wang pointed out that "in-depth interviews with a certain type of community in the same survey area should select at least 10-15 respondents"[11]. Approximately 15 people were selected for this interview, covering inheritors of ceramic handmaking skills in the fields of molding, firing, and decoration. The proportion of inheritors in the field of decoration craftsmanship is relatively high, so the sample selection is also biased. The specific content is as follows which is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Respondents of inheritors of handmaking ceramic skills

Level	National level	Provincial level	Municipal level
Number of persons	3 persons	8 persons	4 persons
Skill System	Molding craft Decorative craft Firing Craft	Molding craft Decorative craft Firing Craft	Decorative craft

Compared to city level inheritors, national and provincial inheritors have higher recognition standards and are representative and influential in relevant fields. Therefore, the proportion of interviewees with national and provincial inheritors is relatively high. Interview these representative inheritors to understand their inheritance mode, difficulties encountered, and current survival status. Based on this, grasp the inheritance status and provide specific suggestions, which is of great significance for promoting the future inheritance of ceramic intangible cultural heritage.

4. Problems and Suggestions in the Inheritance Process of Ceramic Handmaking Skills from the Perspective of Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage

4.1. Personal Skills Are on the Brink of Extinction

It mainly manifested in the raw material molding category. According to interviews with two provincial-level inheritors of the construction techniques of traditional porcelain kilns in Jingdezhen, traditional firewood kilns are very few in Jingdezhen, and most of them have developed into electric kilns, gas kilns, etc. The work of repairing kilns is also gradually decreasing. Zuxing Yu, one of the inheritors, is a representative inheritor of the production techniques of traditional porcelain kilns in Jingdezhen, the second batch of intangible cultural heritage projects. Currently, there are only three inheritors of constructing the Handmade kiln; one of them is over 70 years old. The income brought by this skill was very small, and Zuxing Yu relied on odd jobs such as water and electricity installation to make a living. The ancient skill of firewood kilns was on the brink of extinction. Zuxing Yu also proposed his own suggestion: to ignite the enthusiasm of young people to deeply understand the skills of firewood kilns and experience traditional culture through practical actions such as entering the campus, experiencing and learning how to make the firewood kilns, and developing cultural and creative products, laying a solid foundation for the inheritance of the next generation. In the future, the government needs to deeply consider how to effectively protect the soon to be lost ceramic handmaking skills. Relevant experts and scholars can be invited to participate in exchange or research activities to find appropriate solutions.

4.2. The Theoretical Level of Inheritors Needs to Be Strengthened

From the interviews with inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, it can be seen that as university teachers and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, the three interviewees Li Wenye,

Liu Xiaoyu, and Wang Qingli have systematic knowledge in ceramic theory, art history, and other aspects. They have a macro perspective and can keep up with the times and constantly innovate when creating works. And combining my advantages in working in universities, I will effectively teach students non legacy porcelain skills in the classroom, and have my own unique insights into the development of cultural and creative products related to handmade porcelain skills. However, some inheritors of intangible cultural heritage are passed down through their families and only possess a certain individual skill. They have not undergone systematic artistic theory learning in universities and only practice. Therefore, inheritors need to engage in relevant theoretical learning to better inherit and innovate their skills.

4.3 The Enhancement of the Spirit of Craftsmanship among the Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The inheritance and innovation of ceramic handmaking skills require fully leveraging the "craftsman" spirit of the inheritors. It was learned from interviews with the responsible person of individual ceramic intangible cultural heritage production protection bases (where the intangible cultural heritage inheritors are located) that currently, there are relatively few inheritors of intangible cultural heritage who have been studying ceramic craftsmanship for decades, and many of their works are difficult to surpass the ceramic masterpieces of the Ming and Qing dynasties. This requires the inheritors of ceramic handmaking skills to strive for excellence in their skills, inherit the traditional craftsmanship spirit of ancient China. They should realize the value of artistic and shoulder the historical responsibility. In the future, the government should establish a cultural atmosphere that respects craftsmen, and provide a good external environment for the cultivation of craftsmanship spirit through the formulation of relevant legal systems to ensure the quality of craftsmanship. At the same time, higher standards should be set for the identification of inheritors, so that if they fail to meet the identification standards, they should be left vacant, rather than just winning by quantity.

4.4. The Government's Support for Publicity Needs to Be Improved

Through the annual Ceramic Expo, Jingdezhen City has established an exhibition area for intangible cultural heritage inheritors, an intangible cultural heritage community, and domestic and international ceramic exchanges, enabling inheritors of handmade porcelain skills to communicate with each other and promote Jingdezhen's millennium old ceramic culture both domestically and internationally. However, according to feedback from respondents, due to different processes involved, their communication is limited to government organized activities, and they believe that these activities are relatively few. In the future, the government should organize more exchange activities and related learning lectures on skills and experiences among inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to promote further improvement of their skills; At the same time, more people should also enter the community and campus, so that Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage ceramic skills can be understood by more people and integrated into their lives.

5. Conclusion

After interviewed more than 10 inheritors, we collected their problems and advices in this paper. The problems they are facing could be summarized as follows: 1) some skills are on the brink of extinction; 2) the theoretical level of inheritors needs to be strengthened, 3) some of the inheritors are lack of craftsmanship spirit; 3) government support needs to be strengthened. Based on these problems, we propose countermeasures respectively. In the future, we will provide detailed

interview content, collect more interview samples to conduct more in-depth and detailed analysis, so as to protect and inherit the porcelain handmaking craftsmanship.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by College Students' Innovative Entrepreneurial Training Plan Program: Research on the Inheritance and Innovative Development of Ceramic Culture in Jingdezhen under the Background of Cultural and Tourism Integration: Taking Youtian the Ceramic Capital of Japan as a Reference (Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute, Project number: 202310408025)

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