

Research on the Strategy for Constructing an Ecological Protection System for Intangible Cultural Heritage Empowered by the Rural Revitalization Strategy: A Postprint Based on CiteSpace Visual Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose: With the deepening implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, ecological protection of intangible cultural heritage has emerged as a key element for promoting comprehensive economic, cultural, and social development. However, effectively constructing an ecological protection system for intangible cultural heritage under this strategy to achieve living inheritance and sustainable development has become a critical issue requiring urgent exploration.

Methods: This paper employs the CiteSpace visualization analysis tool to conduct systematic bibliometric analysis of literature from the CNKI database.

Results: It deconstructs the endogenous correlation mechanism between the rural revitalization strategy and ecological protection of intangible cultural heritage, and systematically explicates the research evolution trajectory and knowledge mapping characteristics in this field.

Conclusion: Constructing a scientific protection framework requires following the laws of intangible cultural heritage cultural gene decoding, and realizing the mutual construction relationship between living inheritance and sustainable development through the dual coupling mechanism of institutional supply and technological innovation. This finding provides a theoretical breakthrough for resolving the dualistic tension between intangible cultural heritage protection and rural development.

Full Text

Research on Strategies for Constructing an Ecological Protection System for Intangible Cultural Heritage Empowered by the Rural Revitalization Strategy: Based on CiteSpace Visual Analysis

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Abstract

[Purpose] As the rural revitalization strategy is deeply implemented, ecological protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has become a key element in promoting comprehensive economic, cultural, and social development. However, how to effectively construct an ecological protection system for ICH under this strategy to achieve living transmission and sustainable development of ICH culture has become an important issue requiring urgent exploration. **[Method]** This paper employs the CiteSpace visual analysis tool to conduct systematic quantitative analysis of literature from the CNKI database. **[Results]** It deconstructs the endogenous correlation mechanism between the rural revitalization strategy and ICH ecological protection, and systematically explains the evolution trajectory and knowledge mapping characteristics of research in this field. **[Conclusion]** Constructing a scientific protection framework requires adherence to the decoding laws of ICH cultural genes, and realizing the mutual construction relationship between living transmission and sustainable development through the dual coupling mechanism of institutional supply and technological innovation. This finding provides a theoretical breakthrough for resolving the binary tension between ICH protection and rural development.

Keywords: Rural Revitalization; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Ecological Protection; CiteSpace; Living Transmission

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As President Xi Jinping emphasized, “We must ensure that living local culture is passed down, delving deeply into intangible cultural heritage such as folk arts, traditional operas and qiyi, handicrafts, ethnic costumes, and folk

activities. We must organically combine protection and inheritance with development and utilization, integrating the excellent heritage of China' s farming civilization with modern civilizational elements to endow them with new connotations for the era" [?]. ICH, originating from the soil of farming culture, represents the long-term accumulation of wisdom and experience of generations of Chinese ethnic groups and constitutes the deepest spiritual pursuit. It has consistently played a vital role in enhancing national confidence and spirit, as well as strengthening cultural identity, cohesion, and centripetal force [?]. This cultural characteristic establishes a dynamic mutual construction relationship with the rural revitalization strategy: at the cultural dimension, ICH activates rural endogenous dynamics through the reconstruction of festival rituals and reproduction of cultural memory; at the institutional dimension, rural revitalization provides policy guarantees and technical support for ICH protection, forming a synergistic model of "cultural revitalization—economic feedback." Empirical research demonstrates that this mutual construction relationship presents dual dimensions of internalization and externalization in practice—the former manifests as ICH' s reshaping of rural value systems, while the latter represents the structural integration of ICH protection with rural industrial ecology. Through the cultural capital transformation mechanism, the two ultimately construct a collaborative development paradigm of tradition continuation and rural revitalization, achieving the modern transformation of ICH living transmission while consolidating the cultural foundation for comprehensive rural revitalization.

1. The Intrinsic Logic Between Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Rural Revitalization Strategy

The empowerment of rural revitalization strategy in constructing an ecological protection system for ICH provides bidirectional support for activating rural endogenous dynamics and inheriting cultural genes. Based on the CNKI database from 2014 to 2024, we conducted systematic literature selection through advanced search focusing on keywords "rural revitalization" and "intangible cultural heritage," obtaining 565 sample documents after standardized screening. We then employed CiteSpace for knowledge mapping modeling and co-occurrence network analysis to reveal research hotspots and academic status in this field, uncover the internal connections and interactive mechanisms between rural revitalization and ICH ecological protection, and further explore operational ICH ecological protection strategies aligned with China' s rural realities, providing theoretical foundations and practical paradigms for improving rural cultural governance systems and promoting bidirectional flow of urban-rural cultural elements.

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2. Visualized Sample Literature Based on CiteSpace

CiteSpace is a citation visualization software that presents relevant structures and development paths through visual means, identifies key nodes, and analyzes potential research spaces [?]. This study adopts CiteSpace version 6.3.3, exporting 565 documents in “Refworks” format for software analysis. Parameter settings include a time span of 2014.01-2024.12, minimum statistical year set to 1, threshold K set to 20, with other parameters adjusted according to specific conditions such as node quantity.

Keywords can be regarded as abstract representations of documents, with each keyword serving as a label for its corresponding document [?]. A keyword co-occurrence map utilizes the frequency of co-appearing terms in a literature collection to determine relationships among various topics within the represented discipline [?]. It can be inferred that the more frequently keywords appear in the same document, the closer the relationship between the two topics [?]. Analyzing selected keywords and sorting them by frequency with threshold K set to 20 using the LLR algorithm produces Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]. The map shows 296 keyword co-occurrence nodes and 356 connections, with a network density of 0.0082 after pruning, demonstrating close cooperation and strong interconnection among keywords. Node size is proportional to keyword frequency, with larger fonts indicating greater importance. CiteSpace also employs algorithmic empowerment based on the “structural holes” theory in social network theory [?], where nodes for “intangible cultural heritage” and “rural revitalization strategy” display prominent brown ring characteristics. Their high betweenness centrality confirms that they constitute core hubs within the field. The high frequency and multi-dimensional connectivity features reveal their dual academic functions: they serve as both core research objects forming independent knowledge systems and construct a “macro–meso–micro” research framework through interdisciplinary connections (such as subfields of ancient village protection and handicraft inheritance). The network topology demonstrates that this field has formed a multidisciplinary theoretical matrix covering cultural ecological protection, rural governance mechanisms, and heritage activation paths, providing systematic knowledge mapping support for interpreting the mutual construction relationship between ICH and rural revitalization.

2.1.2 Clustering Analysis of High-Frequency Keywords

Keyword clustering refers to grouping keywords with similar research themes or content into several cluster communities [?], enabling researchers to more intuitively understand current research hotspots and frontier issues while discovering connections and differences among various research topics. By clustering the keyword co-occurrence map and selecting the top ten cluster communities,

we obtain Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. Generally, the Q-value ranges between $[0, 1)$, where $Q > 0.3$ indicates that the divided community structure is significant. When the S-value reaches 0.7, the clustering is highly efficient and convincing, while values above 0.5 are generally considered reasonable [?]. In this study, the keyword clustering module value Q is 0.8189, and the mean silhouette value S is 0.9857, indicating a significant clustering structure with excellent and convincing results.

Clustering analysis reveals that the research field of “rural revitalization · intangible cultural heritage” presents core concept clusters, with unprecedented academic attention focused on ICH protection and inheritance. Research hotspots concentrate on three dimensions: first, constructing ICH ontological protection mechanisms to ensure the continuation of historical value and cultural connotation; second, developing digital protection technologies for inheritors to promote living transmission; and third, innovating the integration of rural cultural ecology. Notably, academic discussions that deeply explore the combination of rural revitalization and ICH remain relatively limited, with the radiating disciplinary fields and discussion depth requiring further expansion. With increasingly clear national policy orientation, the deep integration of ICH protection, inheritance, and rural revitalization strategy will inevitably become an important trend in academic research and practical exploration.

3. Realistic Dilemmas in Constructing an ICH Ecological Protection System from the Rural Revitalization Perspective

The construction of an ICH ecological protection system under the rural revitalization strategy framework carries dual value logics of cultural continuity and sustainable development. Current practices present significant structural contradictions: institutional guarantees are improving while digital communication effectiveness remains insufficient [?]. For example, the official Weibo account of the “Guangdong Cantonese Opera House,” which has been operating for 13 years, has only accumulated 19,000 followers, indicating that public attention to ICH culture remains to be enhanced. Meanwhile, the highly anticipated Cantonese opera film *The Legend of White Snake*, despite initial attention, failed to sustain significant popularity after its official release [?], further reflecting the challenges ICH culture faces in modern communication. Therefore, to construct a comprehensive ICH ecological protection system, we must first have a full and profound understanding of the current realistic dilemmas.

3.1 Intensification of Farmer Subjectivity Contradiction: “Weak Participation” Constraining the Ecological System

“Community participation” is one of the fundamental principles of ICH protection [?]. UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Her-

itage repeatedly emphasizes that the subjects of ICH inheritance and protection extend from groups to individuals. As creators and inheritors of ICH, farmers should theoretically constitute the core force of the protection system. However, due to relatively low economic development levels in rural areas, farmers often focus more on livelihood issues, resulting in insufficient active participation in many ICH inheritance and protection efforts. The protection system struggles to form effective operational mechanisms at the grassroots level, making it difficult to realize the principle of “community participation” among grassroots farmer populations. Professor Sun Jiuxia points out that “community participation” can be categorized into various types in terms of mode and level, including strong participation, weak participation, and non-participation. “Weak participation” specifically refers to communities’ superficial or passive participation motivated by economic benefits through providing primary service labor and contributing minimal materials [?]. In constructing ICH ecological protection systems, farmers often exhibit attitudes of “weak participation” or even “non-participation,” hindering system construction. They fail to fully recognize their principal status and important role in ICH protection, lacking the awareness and motivation for active participation and positive contribution. Simultaneously, some farmer groups excessively pursue the commercial value of ICH, distorting its original intention and essence, causing its cultural connotation and unique value to gradually fade under the drive of commercial interests and losing its original purity and inheritability. This phenomenon highlights the lack of independence and consciousness among farmer groups.

3.2 The “Skill Without Successor” Crisis Caused by Serious Aging of Inheritors

As of August 2024, China has 3,056 national-level representative ICH inheritors, among whom 1,345 (71.5%) are over 70 years old, while only 18 (1%) are under 50. Among the 1,082 ICH inheritors recognized and announced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in the fifth batch, the average age is 63.29, with those under 40 accounting for 0.65% and those 70 and above accounting for 31.79%. Some localities and projects have even experienced an inheritor “vacuum” phenomenon [?]. Data clearly demonstrates that China’s ICH inheritor community faces a serious generational gap, with severe shortages in ICH talent reserves in rural areas and a significantly expanding supply-demand gap. Numerous ICH projects have consequently fallen into the severe crisis of “skill loss with departure” and “technique death with death.” This crisis manifests in two main aspects: the serious aging of ICH inheritors’ age structure, and the emergence of a generational gap and the increasingly prominent problem of failing succession in the ICH talent pipeline.

The modernization process has accelerated the deconstruction of traditional production and living spaces, fundamentally impacting the cultural ecosystem of ICH inheritance. Data shows that 67.8% of traditional craft ICH faces a vicious cycle of “aging skill holders—absent inheritance subjects—disappearing cultural

spaces.” The complete inheritance system disintegration rate for traditional music ICH has reached 42.3%, confirming the “artisan transformation” phenomenon revealed in the film *Song of the Phoenix*—68.5% of traditional artists are forced to abandon skill inheritance due to livelihood pressures. This dramatic cultural ecological shift not only causes the loss of ICH projects’ “embodied knowledge” but also leads to the systematic disappearance of local cultural memory carriers, creating a paradoxical dilemma of “technical survival” coexisting with “cultural extinction.”

3.3 The Dual Crisis of Online Communication in ICH Ecological Protection Systems

In recent years, major self-media platforms have actively responded to the national rural revitalization strategy by launching series of activities to support new farmers, greatly stimulating the creative enthusiasm for short videos on agriculture, rural areas, and farmers, and sparking a wave of creative 高潮. In this tide, new farmer bloggers such as “Li Ziqi,” “Shan Bai,” and “Jiang Xunqian” have emerged prominently. They choose to return to rural areas, actively utilizing short videos—a highly communicative medium—to engage in the dissemination and promotion of ICH projects. They are not only inheritors of ICH skills but also communicators of ICH culture. Through online dissemination of ICH projects via self-media platforms, they significantly enhance public awareness and attention toward ICH, thereby inspiring more people to engage in ICH protection and inheritance.

However, some concerning issues have emerged during the dissemination of ICH short videos. On one hand, while economic benefits have indeed attracted some people back to rural areas as ICH communicators, this has also led to serious content homogenization. Some creators excessively imitate and copy the styles and techniques of well-known bloggers, lacking innovation and uniqueness, causing aesthetic fatigue among audiences. On the other hand, more people often treat ICH short videos as a novelty, merely satisfying momentary curiosity without deeply understanding and exploring the cultural connotation and value of ICH projects. This superficial viewing approach results in low inheritance and conversion rates for ICH projects, making it difficult to achieve effective communication and inheritance of ICH culture.

4. Implementation Paths for Optimizing the ICH Ecological Protection System Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy

“Intangible cultural heritage, as ancient life memory and living cultural genes, constitutes the root, bloodline, and soul of a nation, and is the source of strength for a nation’ s future” [?]. In the process of deeply implementing the rural revitalization strategy, ICH and rural cultural revitalization demonstrate an or-

ganic integration of tradition and modernity, achieving mutual compatibility and synergistic development at the level of cultural continuity. Through visual mapping analysis of sample literature using CiteSpace, we find that although current research focuses on how ICH can empower rural revitalization strategy, in fact, with appropriate pathways, the rural revitalization strategy can also provide strong support and empowerment for constructing ICH ecological protection systems. This bidirectional interactive relationship indicates that ICH and rural revitalization possess potential for mutual promotion and common development.

The collaborative advancement of ICH protection and rural revitalization forms a systematic paradigm through three paths: cultural ecological reconstruction, educational mechanism innovation, and digital communication. At the cultural ecological dimension, based on Wang Miao's proposal in his work *What Should ICH Do in Implementing Rural Revitalization Strategy* that rural areas should strive to achieve the “eight ones” goal (one folk story, one ICH performance project, one traditional handicraft, one characteristic traditional festival, one traditional flavor snack, one historical figure, one set of clan rules and family instructions, and one historical site 遗迹 [?]) to fully explore and display rural cultural resources, ICH symbols are implanted into eco-town construction to activate the economic value and social functions of cultural resources through the culture-tourism integration model. Typical cases such as Changsha Pozi Street and Dali Ancient City reconstruct farmers' cultural subjectivity through ICH scenarized display, resolving their lack of cultural consciousness and creativity. At the educational mechanism level, university-exclusive platforms construct a coupling system for inheritor cultivation [?], leveraging three-dimensional linkages of theoretical training, practical guidance, and display communication to enhance inheritors' cultural capital and intergenerational connection efficiency while alleviating the aging crisis through institutional platform construction and government funding systems, achieving sustainable development of ICH living transmission. At the technical empowerment dimension, technologies such as virtual reality and big data construct digital survival spaces for ICH, with ICH digital resource libraries completing permanent storage of cultural genes, while communication form innovations such as “ICH + live streaming/e-commerce/short videos” break through traditional inheritance spatiotemporal boundaries through internet fission effects [?], deeply embedding ICH into contemporary life fields. The three paths form a three-dimensional collaborative mechanism with cultural protection as the foundation, talent cultivation as the support, and technological innovation as the driver, providing endogenous cultural momentum and innovation engines for rural revitalization.

This paper employs CiteSpace to conduct quantitative analysis of 565 documents from 2014–2024, revealing the internal logic between rural revitalization and ICH ecological protection. Research findings indicate that the rural revitalization strategy injects endogenous dynamics into ICH protection by reconstructing cultural spaces and resource empowerment, with its living transmission depending on the construction of scientific ecological protection systems.

Practice faces three dilemmas: weakened farmer subject participation, intergenerational rupture of inheritors, and risks of cultural alienation caused by online communication. Optimization paths require integrating spatial reshaping, subject cultivation, and technical empowerment, specifically including embedding ICH symbols into rural cultural ecological spaces, building university inheritor incubation platforms, and improving digital protection mechanisms. This study provides a theoretical framework and practical reference for systematically advancing ICH ecological protection against the backdrop of rural revitalization.

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