

Review

A Systematic Analysis of Intangible Cultural Heritage from Multidimensional Perspectives

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Abstract: This article seeks to undertake what might be characterized as a multidimensional analysis of Intangible Cultural Heritage Studies, tracing what appears to be the evolution of theoretical frameworks, classification logics, protection systems, and transmission mechanisms in contemporary China. By examining both institutional arrangements and lived practices, this review appears to suggest what seems to be a subtle interplay between administrative order, local knowledge, and cultural vitality. What seems to emerge from this review is the apparent ambiguity inherent in translating lived experience into formal categories, the seemingly ongoing negotiation between state discourse and community agency, and the complex power dynamics embedded in processes of recognition, incentive, and cultural reproduction. Reflecting on the methodological and conceptual challenges that appear to be facing current scholarship, what this analysis tends to support is the call for more nuanced, critical, and participatory approaches. What also appears significant in this context is the need for new research agendas attentive to both the tensions and the possibilities that emerge at the intersection of tradition, policy, and social transformation.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage; classification systems; heritage transmission; policy and governance

1. The Disciplinary Trajectory of Intangible Cultural Heritage Knowledge

The global attention directed toward intangible cultural heritage (ICH) seems to stem not only from its role in ensuring the continuity of cultural identity but also from its ostensibly persistent confrontation with what appears to be the challenge of redefining knowledge categories in the modern era. Within this broader analytical framework, the emergence of “Intangible Cultural Heritage Studies” as an academic field in China appears to owe a great deal to the conceptual shifts initiated at the level of international law, as well as to local scholars’ sustained reflection, which seems to be rooted in practical cultural experience. What the evidence appears to reveal is that the evolution of this discipline is gradual, typically marked by negotiations and tensions that appear to shape its identity within complex historical and social contexts.

What seems to result from these considerations is that the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2003 was more than a mere legal milestone; it appears to have recast ICH from what might be characterized as a set of diffuse local practices into an object subject to academic scrutiny. As Lenzerini points out, the convention does not simply provide a legal rationale; what appears to be its true significance seems to lie in repositioning ICH as a field open to systematic definition and research. What this tends to indicate is a prompting for scholars to reconsider the long-standing interplay between “cultural vitality” and “institutional rationality” [1]. From this particular interpretive perspective, the textual evolution of policy and law seemingly mirrors deeper intellectual debates over the very nature of heritage.

In response to what appear to be ongoing global developments, scholars seem to have adopted a range of varied perspectives. Stefano, for instance, appears to identify what may be characterized as the contemporary crises afflicting ICH—namely, cultural dilution, technological disparities, and what seems to be the marginalization of community agency [2]. Within this broader analytical framework, his analyses largely remain grounded in the interplay between policy mechanisms and theoretical critique, appearing to provide important points of reference for ongoing debates within the Chinese academic sphere.



Meanwhile, a number of Chinese researchers are apparently turning toward quantitative methodologies and data-driven approaches to reconstruct what might be termed the architecture of ICH knowledge. What Li and colleagues appear to propose, for example, is a model for threat-level classification that integrates measurable indicators, seemingly to clarify the taxonomy, potential risks of loss, and priorities for preservation [3]. What seems to emerge from these findings is a context in which the previous dominance of intuition and experiential judgment appears to give way to a framework of technical and evaluative precision, ostensibly blending the demands of state governance with the requirements of systematic knowledge organization.

Beyond mere taxonomy, the degree of genuine community participation now seemingly stands as a substantial criterion by which the effectiveness of governance is often judged. What Eichler's work appears to do is interrogate the structures of authority and discourse within the field, examining the distribution of decision-making power and the shaping of conservation agendas [4]. What appears to warrant further interpretive consideration is how issues of agency, identity, and belonging are frequently brought to the fore as local knowledge and minority voices risk being subsumed within national heritage lists. What this pattern seems to suggest, therefore, is that these tensions—between local specificity and institutional generalization—seem to remain inherent to many attempts at academic formalization.

In light of these methodological considerations, the digital turn has seemingly added new layers of complexity. Fan's work on metadata modeling and the digital representation of ICH tends to ask how technological systems might accommodate the fluid, localized, and living character of heritage [5]. What the evidence appears to reveal is that databases and information infrastructures are rarely simply neutral carriers; they appear to redefine the ways in which heritage knowledge is represented, accessed, and negotiated. What appears to follow from this analysis is that the expansion of technical capacity does not erase the subjectivity of cultural expression. Rather, it appears to intensify academic debates over the balance between standardization and diversity.

What this tends to indicate is that the movement toward disciplinarity is rarely linear. Rather than viewing "Intangible Cultural Heritage Studies" as the definitive outcome of institutional planning, it may be more accurate to see it as what seems to constitute the product of long-term negotiation among diverse actors and agendas. Within these evolving conceptual parameters, its evolving knowledge system appears



to respond both to the overarching imperatives of national policy and to the subtle dynamics of cultural vitality at the micro level. The book *Intangible Cultural Heritage Studies* traces this complex terrain, seemingly searching for a mode of inquiry that bridges conceptual exploration and practical intervention [6]. It does not appear to offer definitive answers but rather to open up further questions.

2. The Interplay of Classification Structures and Cultural Logic

It appears the classification of intangible cultural heritage does not simply amount to mere categorization; rather, what seems to emerge is a more complex process. From this particular interpretive perspective, every taxonomy appears to be underpinned by cultural concepts, policy rationales, and what might be characterized as the imprint of its time. Scholarly interest in classification systems has substantially grown, not just as an academic foundation, but as what seems to constitute a mechanism for governance, resource allocation, and community participation. Su and colleagues conducted a bibliometric analysis mapping a decade of ICH research. What seems to emerge from these findings is that typological frameworks have seemingly moved from static divisions toward hybrid models integrating multiple disciplines. What also appears significant in this context is how policy imperatives, community needs, and digital technology each appear to shape classification standards and methods, ostensibly making the knowledge structure more intricate and plural [7]. The evolution of these frameworks seems to lend support to what may represent society's ongoing reappraisal and reconstruction of its own traditions.

Considering the nuanced nature of these findings, classification is rarely confined to academic discussion. Local governance and regional development also appear to depend on these structures. Qiu's research into tourism and spatial governance, for instance, tends to point toward what appears to be a pattern where classification often becomes an operational tool for policy implementation. Regional authorities typically rely on these taxonomies to organize resources and set priorities. What seems to result from these considerations is that the geographical and functional dimensions embedded in the classification process, in turn, appear to define how local cultures are expressed [8]. What appears particularly significant about these findings is this direct link between conceptual frameworks and practical governance outcomes.



Within this broader analytical framework, digital technology appears to broaden the scope of heritage classification. Tang and collaborators have focused on the impact of digital and visualization tools on knowledge management. What the evidence appears to reveal is that methods such as 3D modeling, database systems, and visual interfaces have substantially increased the granularity and fluidity of classification. What this tends to indicate is that static lists are being replaced by dynamic, multidimensional networks, allowing for what appear to be more open and flexible modes of management and representation [9]. These technical shifts seemingly prompt fresh scholarly debate about the boundaries and hierarchies inherent in any classification system. On the theoretical level, Fan (2022) has examined the application of linked data in the resource description of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), highlighting how systematic and adaptable taxonomies serve as the backbone of governance and knowledge-sharing. His analysis underscores that while structured approaches can enhance interoperability and facilitate resource integration, no single classification method is without limitations; to remain effective, such systems must evolve in response to shifting societal needs [10]. What appears to follow from this analysis is that classification is rarely only about archiving knowledge—it seems to be inseparable from processes of cultural identification and the social transmission of meaning.

Singh and T K have turned their attention toward digital classification and knowledge management, and what seems to emerge from their work is how digital platforms appear to support the circulation and co-creation of knowledge across state, community, and individual actors. Within this broader analytical framework, the notion of “type” in ICH seems to have taken on new social significance. Classification is no longer ostensibly an academic exercise; what appears particularly significant about these findings is that it has apparently become what might be characterized as a linchpin for cultural vitality and collective governance [11]. The classification of intangible cultural heritage appears to have evolved into a complex matrix that seems to link theory with tool, and the static with the dynamic. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, each adjustment to standards, each new technological intervention, appears to tend to suggest a pushing of the boundaries of what heritage knowledge can be. Classification itself has seemingly become a central arena for negotiating cultural understanding.

3. System Integration of Protection Regimes and Operational Frameworks

Considering the nuanced nature of these findings, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage appears to remain entangled in a range of competing tensions. Registry systems, survey projects, and database infrastructures seem to form what might be considered the architecture of protection. At the policy level, protective measures appear to be growing increasingly sophisticated, with ostensibly clearer delineations of responsibility. What appears to follow from this analysis is that the balance of power between authorities and community actors tends to constantly shift, seemingly revealing what appears to be an evolution of governance models. The compilation of heritage lists tends to carry what seems to be the imprint of each era. What seems to emerge from this evidence is a pattern where early efforts prioritized urgent rescue, later transitioning toward dynamic transmission. Surveys conducted nationwide accumulate substantially vast archives, yet discrepancies in resource distribution surface. What appears to warrant further interpretive consideration is how institutional design typically answers practical challenges, shaped by compromise.

The principles underpinning protection tend to stress what might be considered vitality, authenticity, and locality. Scholars advocate the idea that safeguarding should arguably mean integration with contemporary life; otherwise, heritage risks losing its relevance. Recognition via registry is now apparently complemented by dynamic management practices. What also appears significant in this context is how community agency assumes what seems to be a pivotal role. Local innovations experiment with systems of heritage bearers and digital archives, searching for balance between institutional order and cultural spontaneity. From this particular interpretive perspective, policy directives and grassroots initiatives appear to intersect, allowing standardization to coexist with diversity.

4. Conclusion



The boundaries between experiential knowledge and theoretical abstraction in the domain of intangible cultural heritage tend to remain remarkably porous; practice and interpretation appear to be inextricably intertwined. Institutional systems tend to extract meaning from lived experience, but such codification appears to carry the risk of stripping knowledge of its original context and what seems to be its creative potential. Administrative efforts to standardize, classify, and incentivize heritage protection appear to reflect a desire for coherence and legitimacy, yet, in the majority of cases, they tend to oversimplify the very complexity and ambiguity that seem to define living traditions. What appears to be particularly significant here is the persistent tension that seems to animate the space between the state's agenda and local realities. National policies tend to articulate a vision of heritage ostensibly shaped by identity, unity, and governance. What these frameworks seem to do is seek to organize and elevate selected practices, imposing a language of value and authenticity. Concurrently, however, local actors typically continue to reinterpret, adapt, and negotiate the meanings of heritage within the shifting landscapes of everyday life. Expressions of intangible culture seem to resist complete assimilation; they often manifest as improvisation, subtle resistance, or a silent persistence just beneath the surface of official policy. What this friction between centralized discourse and grassroots practice seems to suggest is something that shapes not only the fate of particular traditions, but also the broader possibilities for cultural memory and social creativity.

From this particular interpretive perspective, current scholarship appears to stand at what might be described as a crossroads. Within this broader analytical framework, while research has ostensibly mapped systems, structures, and actors, it seems to risk a certain complacency, particularly in the face of methodological routine and policy-driven agendas. What this appears to suggest is that genuine engagement with the realities of transmission, the plurality of forms, and the apparent unpredictability of innovation tends to demand a substantially greater sensitivity to nuance, contradiction, and change. What appears to follow from this analysis is that future studies should arguably address not just what is protected and who is recognized, but also what seems to remain unsaid, unregistered, or untranslatable—a domain that appears to warrant further interpretive consideration. Given the complexity of these theoretical relationships, comparative inquiry, interdisciplinary approaches, and critical dialogue with communities seem to provide evidence that may support a



deeper understanding of how heritage lives, dies, and is reborn. What the evidence appears to reveal is that intangible cultural heritage typically thrives on ambiguity, improvisation, and negotiation. The task for researchers, policymakers, and bearers alike, therefore, appears to be to honor this complexity without reducing it to abstraction or commodification. What seems to result from these considerations is that only through persistent questioning and attentive listening can the field presumably renew its relevance and integrity within these evolving cultural and social landscapes.

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