

# Involvement of Non-Genetic Inheritance in Rural Revitalisation: A Study on the Sustainable Development Model of Purple Sand Industry in Dingshu Town, Yixing

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**Abstract:** In recent years, both the government and society have been actively engaged in promoting rural revitalization through policy guidance, infrastructural enhancements, and the adoption of successful models. This concerted effort has not only bolstered innovation within rural revitalization initiatives but has also fostered the preservation and promotion of rural non-material cultural heritage, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas. This paper delves into the sustainable development of the purple sand industry in Yixing's Dingshu Town within the framework of rural revitalization strategies, using Dingshu Town as a case study. It meticulously examines the current status of the purple sand industry in Dingshu Town while analyzing the challenges and opportunities associated with the preservation and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the paper explores effective methodologies for ensuring the sustainable growth of the purple sand industry in Dingshu Town, Yixing, focusing on aspects such as innovative design, market expansion, talent cultivation, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Additionally, it investigates the interplay between the intangible cultural heritage industry and the arts within the context of rural development. The development of the purple sand industry has not only enriched the local community but has also catalyzed the growth of other related sectors. Throughout Dingshu's history and its present, the purple sand industry has played a pivotal role. With China's ongoing economic and social progress, coupled with the increasing emphasis on social consumption, the purple sand industry has emerged as a crucial element in people's pursuit of spiritual and cultural fulfillment in modern times. Undoubtedly, it is poised to reach new heights of development in the foreseeable future.

**Keywords:** Non-genetic Inheritance; Artistic Township Construction; Rural Revitalisation; Cultural Industry Research; Yixing Purple Sand.

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of rural revitalisation in China, the preservation and innovation of traditional culture are of crucial importance. Yixing Dingshu City, one of the birthplaces of purple sand pottery, has demonstrated a unique model of sustainable development by combining traditional crafts and rural revitalisation. Purple sand pottery is a treasure of traditional Chinese craftsmanship and harbours a long historical and cultural heritage. The town of Dingshu is famous for its rich pottery tradition. The protection, transmission and development of the valuable cultural heritage in today's society while promoting rural revitalisation is an urgent issue. This thesis explores the sustainable development model of the purple sand industry in Dingshu Town, Yixing. It explores the balance and innovation between traditional cultural heritage and modern development.

## 2. Research Background and Significance

### 2.1. Policy Background

In recent years, China has focused on promoting the revitalisation of rural areas, and the policy direction of rural art construction has gradually shown a positive trend. In 2018, the Central Document No. 1 clearly pointed out that "the characteristics of the cultural industry in the countryside must be vigorously built" and advocated the construction of a more complete and better rural industry chain. The report of the 20th Party Congress emphasised the need to "comprehensively promote the revitalisation of rural areas"

and "coordinate the layout of rural infrastructure and public services and build livable, functional and beautiful villages". Central Committee Document No. 1 of 2023 further emphasised the important task of rural revitalisation.[1].

The revitalization of rural areas is intricately linked with culture, with intangible cultural heritage (ICH) playing a central role. In line with this understanding, the 2021 Opinions on Further Strengthening the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, issued jointly by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council, underscore the importance of enhancing professional support for safeguarding ICH in impoverished regions. The document also emphasizes leveraging intangible cultural heritage to bolster rural revitalization efforts, advocating for the establishment of workshops dedicated to ICH to foster employment and income opportunities for local communities grappling with poverty.

This study aligns closely with the prevailing policy imperatives driving rural revitalization in China, as well as with the nation's overarching commitment to promoting and preserving intangible cultural heritage. It not only responds to the current needs of rural revitalization but also reflects the country's evolving trajectory towards advancing the dissemination and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage.

### 2.2. Background of Rural Development

The development of rural culture in the new era was not easy. Firstly, there is the influence of urban culture. Rural society blindly learns from the cultural development model of the city, and the urban orientation of rural culture reduces the

original spontaneous mass cultural activities, and the original spiritual world of the life and precious spiritual values are gradually lost, and rural life loses its own unique spiritual significance and unique cultural charm [2]. Secondly, there is the problem of the "hollowing out" of the areas as large numbers of people move to the cities, making it difficult to find heirs of skills even if they need to be passed on. Even if there are skills that need to be passed on, it is difficult to find those who want to pass them on.

### **2.3. Research Significance**

The study contributes to a deeper understanding and preservation of local culture and emphasises the role of non-heritage industries and artistic village building in local economic development. Understanding the potential and characteristics of these industries will help to formulate policies to promote local economic growth, create employment opportunities and improve the living standards of local residents. Studying the interplay between non-cultural industries and artistic village building helps to understand their role in social cohesion and community development. Through the development of these activities and industries, community cohesion can be strengthened, relationships between residents can be fostered and a sense of community can be enhanced. Encourage innovation in non-heritage industries and the development of artistic villages. By reinterpreting traditional culture and combining it with contemporary art, new products, services and experiences can be created that promote sustainable development in these areas.

## **3. Theoretical Foundations**

### **3.1. Concept and Characteristics of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**

Intangible cultural heritage, or "ICH" for short, in China refers to the traditional cultural expressions that have been passed down from generation to generation by different ethnic groups and are considered part of their cultural heritage, as well as the objects and places associated with traditional cultural expressions. The concept of intangible cultural heritage has undergone a certain development related to the needs of the state, society and the times, and has not been in the public eye for very long.

The introduction to intangible cultural heritage lists seven characteristics of intangible heritage: Uniqueness, Ethnicity, Heritage, Completeness, Vibrancy, Fluidity and Regionality. The protection of intangible heritage should follow four basic principles: Authenticity, Interpretability, Sustainability and Integrity. The protection of intangible cultural heritage should follow four basic principles: Authenticity, interpretability, sustainability and holism.[3].

### **3.2. The Concept Definition and Characteristics of Art Rural Construction**

Artistic building in rural areas is the concept and practise of integrating artistic elements into rural construction and development. It aims to enhance the cultural heritage, vitality and attractiveness of the areas and to promote the development and prosperity of local communities through artistic creation, cultural activities and public artworks. For example, artworks, sculptures, murals and artistic approaches to landscaping are brought to villages to beautify the rural environment and enhance its attractiveness and cultural

atmosphere. By supporting the local cultural and creative industries, artists, artisans and creative talents are encouraged to create works in the villages and promote the development of related industries, thereby strengthening the economic vitality of the villages. Lively cultural activities and exchanges, organising various art exhibitions, cultural festivals, handicraft bazaars and other activities to promote cultural exchanges between villages and towns and between different regions, and to improve people's knowledge and understanding of culture, etc.

Artists in villages far away from cities and less affected by the impact and damage of urbanisation transform abandoned houses into art spaces and studios, create works based on traditional rural culture and simple environment, and beautify the village environment through art, which is the first manifestation of "art village building". Compared with foreign countries, which mainly devote themselves to creating art communities in villages, the construction of art villages in China started later. It is in line with the policy of contributing to the revitalisation of rural areas through art and emphasising the role of traditional culture and the cultural strengthening of the areas. In addition to fulfilling the basic task of beautifying the countryside, the construction of art villages in China is also a way to stimulate villagers' endogenous motivation, combine poverty alleviation and wisdom cultivation, support villagers' pursuit of a better life, and create a new type of rural cultural ecosystem with contemporary characteristics[3].

## **4. Case Analysis of the Practice of Non-Heritage Industry Helping Art Rural Construction --Taking Purple Sand in Dingshu Village of Yixing as an Example**

### **4.1. The Present Situation and Development Bottleneck of Purple Sand Industry in Dingshu Village**

Dingshu Town is a thousand-year-old city where mountains, water and city merge into one another. It is located 14 kilometres south-east of the city of Yixing, which is famous for its wealth of ceramics and is known as the "pottery capital". As one of the important birthplaces of Yixing Purple Sand Art, the village of Dingshu has inherited a long tradition of purple sand pottery. The local craftsmen have created many classic purple sand teapots, teacups and teaware with their exquisite craftsmanship and rich experience. With their traditional craftsmanship skills, they create a variety of purple sand pottery with different shapes and fancy designs, which are not only practical but also have deep cultural connotations and artistic charm. All in all, as one of the birthplaces of Yixing purple sand art, Dingshu Village has a rich cultural heritage of purple sand. Visitors can experience the charm of purple sand pottery up close, buy excellent purple sand tea sets and experience this unique and exquisite artistic tradition. The town is also a major tourist attraction that draws many tourists to experience the ancient and enchanting landscape.

However, with the change in consumer attitudes and market demand, traditional purple sand pottery has not fully adapted to the aesthetics and needs of modern people. Some traditional crafts and designs may not be able to adopt modern concepts in time, resulting in products with insufficient highlights in the market and reduced competitiveness. The traditional craftsmanship of purple sand pottery requires long-

term learning and inheritance, but it is difficult to find heirs, and the Yixing purple sand is mostly inherited in the family, so the new generation may have no interest in traditional craftsmanship, leading to the risk that the inheritance of skills will be flawed and lost. Insufficient local industrial modernisation and innovation activities, as more innovation and modernisation are needed in all aspects of the purple sand ceramic industry chain, including the selection of raw materials, craft design, production and marketing to adapt to the needs of modern society and the market. Due to the lack of effective branding and marketing, the purple sand pottery of Dingshu Village lacks visibility and competitiveness in the broad market. Based on this status quo, this paper focuses on the development path of the purple sand industry in Dingshu Village and combines it with the construction of the art city to jointly explore specific solution strategies.

## **4.2. The Development Path of Purple Sand Industry Empowering Art Rural Construction in Dingshu Village**

### **4.2.1. Push the Envelope, Innovative Design for the Times**

The purple sand of Yixing has a history of more than six hundred years and is unique and enduring among handicrafts. The inheritance of non-heritage skills and traditions is a problem that every purple sand artist must face and think about in order to give the purple sand industry the spirit of the times, improve the artistic level and show the infinite charm of purple sand. Since the craft culture is mostly inherited through the family system or the master-apprentice system, imitating the design of predecessors is generally accepted, and there are often imitations or even plagiarisms in the alabaster market, resulting in the alabaster lacking its own soul. This calls for innovative design in the creation of contemporary alabaster works by alabaster artists.

Future development should take into account modern aesthetics and functional needs on the basis of preserving the traditional art of purple sand. The purple sand industry can try to design more modern styles of tea sets that incorporate more fashionable and minimalist design elements, so that the traditional art of purple sand is closer to the lives and aesthetics of people today. At the level of technological innovation, through technological innovation and material research and development, we can add new functional properties to purple sand pottery, such as improving heat retention and facilitating cleaning, to adapt to the needs of modern life. At the same time, by connecting with local culture and history, we explore more diverse creative inspirations and integrate these elements into the design to maintain and continue the unique charm of purple sand pottery.

In order to adapt to the development trend of the digital age and the trend of young people's consumption, the purple sand industry in Dingshu Village now has various forms of combined teams of potters working together to explore a new way of developing the heritage and industrialisation of the art of purple sand. In the future, the use of digital design, 3D printing and other modern technological means could be considered to improve production efficiency and create more innovative and personalised works. For example, to create NFT purple sand artworks, create digital purple sand collections, and contribute to the development of the rural digital economy.

### **4.2.2. Passing on the Torch and Nurturing Talents to Help Development**

Talents are the first resource for the social and economic development of the areas, and the heritage of alabaster industry as a traditional non-inherited culture needs new impetus to promote its development. Dingshu City should pay attention to the cultivation and introduction of talents and pay attention to the versatility of talents, actively implement the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important instructions on the prosperity of cultural industry development, continue to concentrate efforts and further expand the channels for the enrichment and development of alabaster talents, and promote the high-quality development of the alabaster industry. Rural non-genetic talents serve as cultural carriers, mediators, negotiators, disseminators and other roles in the protection and development of rural non-genetic heritage. According to the categorisation of talent types, rural non-genetic talents can be divided into inheritors, management service talents and business management talents[4].

Inheritance of talents: Purple sand is a craft industry, and the most important thing is the inheritance of craft. Nowadays, there are many projects that are not based on inheritance, do not have enough to pass on, and even face the dilemma that there is no one left to carry on the legacy. As an industry with a long history and economic advantages, Dingshu Township has a relative advantage in terms of the number of employees, but in the modern market economy that strives for high efficiency and mass production, it is still important not to abandon the refinement of handicrafts. Dingshu Township needs to help villagers improve their skills as well as attract craftsmen from outside. For example, it has established artisan cooperatives, organised master-apprentice mentoring, offered public internships and held pottery competitions to increase the number of local talents who have obtained professional titles and to continuously increase the influence and reputation of the Yixing Purple Sand brand.

Technical Talents: Purple sand needs the help of machinery and technology in addition to pure manual labour, such as mechanical mud which can greatly reduce the workload, electric kilns which are more convenient and faster, etc. The city of Dingshu should carry out special research on the work of scientific and technological talents, according to the direction of Yixing ceramic and refractory industry new materials, for resident enterprises to provide one-stop technical guidance, national material testing, special equipment leasing, professional training, scientific research project cooperation, product pilot services, such as ceramic public technical services. It can form an innovative system of service content and information services, focusing on the crowdsourcing space where industry, government, scientific research and academics intermingle and support multi-level professional services.

Build Talents: Dingshu Township should integrate the training of talents into the overall development of the township, continuously improve the political quality of young cadres, and strive to create a strong organisational guarantee for the development of grassroots work. Both theoretical lectures and practical training can be used to improve young cadres' ability to solve problems and crack problems through a variety of forms and practical training courses.

### **4.2.3. Carry Forward the Culture and Shape the Characteristic Town of Purple Sand**

The city of Dingshu, which is characterised by its "purple sand pots", has been named a "famous city of Chinese history

and culture", a "hometown of Chinese ceramic art" and a "hometown of Chinese folk art", and was included in the first batch of China's characteristic cities in 2017.

Dingshu Town has now begun to build a distinctive city. A major challenge for the alabaster industry in Dingshu Town is to make the characteristic alabaster town stand out among the major ancient towns and enhance its unique competitiveness. Relying on the purple sand culture with a long history and rich connotation, Dingshu Town can follow the three major contexts of the ecological culture axis, the vacation vitality zone, and the cultural and creative industrial park, adhere to the four principles of ecological protection, cultural exploration, industrial drive, and moderate development, and explore and develop the cultural and creative industries. The construction of the "purple sand characteristic town" with the cultural tourism industry as the center of gravity. For example,

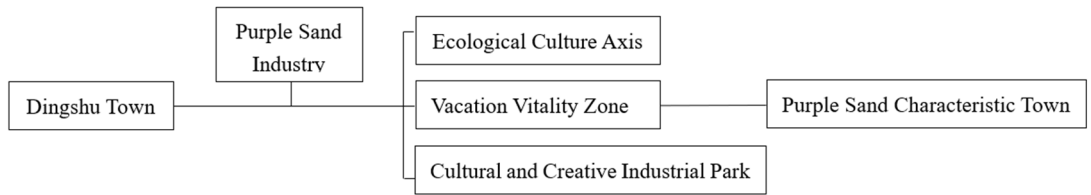


Figure 1. Shaping Process of Purple sand Characteristic Town

## 5. Research on the Interactive Relationship between Non-Heritage Industry and Art Village

Cultural heritage and innovation: Non-cultural heritage comes from the land, and art cannot be separated from culture. On the one hand, non-cultural heritage is the essence of national culture and provides a spiritual orientation for the country. On the other hand, the country provides a simple and original environment for the heritage and development of non-cultural heritage, so that the non-cultural heritage is not just on paper and worn out, but is revitalised in the new era, and the excellent traditional Chinese culture is protected and carried forward. The non-heritage industry inherits the history and culture, while the construction of art villages can breathe new life into the traditional culture through innovative and contemporary artistic means. The great depth and richness of excellent traditional culture in the non-heritage industry provides artists with inexhaustible inspiration for their creations, and the combination of tradition and modernity when artists use elements from the non-heritage industry in their creations also creates new forms for the heritage of the non-heritage industry.

Tourism and promotion: The non-heritage sector can be an important resource for attracting tourists, while the construction of art villages can attract more tourists to visit and experience them through art exhibitions and cultural festivals. Activities such as art installations, performances and exhibitions can raise awareness of NH culture. The integration of non-natural heritage and its elements not only enhances the cultural charm and cultural appeal of rural tourism, but also provides the traditional culture with the opportunity for creative transformation and innovative development, so that it can be integrated into modern life in a newer look, in a more diverse way and in a more fascinating gesture, so that today's landscape is more colourful and beautiful, with more cultural connotations and cultural flavours.

Economic development and employment opportunities:

the space for the display and exchange of ideas will be enlarged so that creative people can come together, turn their designs into goods and find owners who like their works; the experience of participation will be enhanced so that people who are interested in alabaster can learn about alabaster culture while experiencing the fun of handicrafts; and new media communication will be integrated to follow the hotspots of the Internet and increase the popularity of alabaster in Dingshu Town.

The layout of the characteristic town can bring new forms of business to the alabaster industry, let more people feel the charm of alabaster culture in different ways, and serve both alabaster culture and rural revitalisation, which not only carries forward the culture but also improves the quality of life in rural countryside.

The development of non-heritage industries and the construction of artists' villages can promote the development of the local economy. Non-heritage projects that have obvious economic benefits can be developed into specialised rural industries that not only boost the prosperity of the rural economy, but also provide an effective way for villagers to share their wealth [5]. Through the production of non-heritage handicrafts, the development of cultural and creative products, and the implementation of art projects, local industries and employment can be promoted.

Rural cohesion and cultural identity: in the implementation of the strategy of rural revitalization, we must give full play to the role of culture, use culture to cast the soul of the countryside, and use culture to gather spiritual strength for rural revitalization. To revitalize the countryside, the culture of the countryside must be revitalized. The enhancement of cultural cohesion provides favorable conditions and new important opportunities for intangible cultural heritage to re-show vitality and vitality, connect rural modern life, and bloom charming luster.

## 6. Conclusion

The purple sand art should not only have the accuracy of creation and craftsmanship, but also the depth of inheritance and culture, and more importantly, the power to adapt to the aesthetics of the times. Purple sand culture has been continuously inherited and developed, exchanged and collided, pushing purple sand art to a more perfect realm. Dingshu Town, while inheriting the historical glory, adheres to the comprehensive and high-quality development with a new attitude, and moves towards the goal of building a new Dingshu with strong economy, rich people, beautiful environment and high degree of social civilization. In the future practice of rural revitalization, intangible cultural heritage and rural revitalization are mutually empowering and complementing each other, and there is still much room for exploration and innovation.

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