

# Research on the Living Inheritance of Dong Ethnic Traditional Craftsmanship from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

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**Keywords:** Dong Ethnic Group, Cultural Identity, Traditional Crafts, Dynamic Inheritance

**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the dynamic inheritance of traditional Dong crafts from the perspective of cultural identity. Combining literature review and field research, this study deeply analyzes the historical background, current status, and contemporary inheritance modes of Dong traditional crafts. Despite challenges posed by modernization and globalization, Dong traditional crafts maintain their unique cultural value and social significance. The paper highlights that strengthening cultural identity is a key factor in promoting the dynamic inheritance of Dong traditional crafts. Enhancing public awareness and respect for the value of traditional crafts, as well as stimulating the interest of younger generations in their inheritance, can effectively promote the transmission and development of Dong culture. This paper provides new perspectives and thoughts on understanding and protecting ethnic cultural heritage, especially against the backdrop of rapid development and societal diversification.

## 1. Introduction

Focusing on the dynamic inheritance of traditional Dong crafts in contemporary society (figure 1), particularly from the perspective of cultural identity, this paper discusses the rich cultural and artistic heritage of the Dong, a significant ethnic group in Southwest China [1]. Traditional crafts, as a vital component of Dong culture, not only reflect the wisdom of the Dong people but also serve as important carriers of cultural identity and inheritance [2].



Figure 1 Dynamic Inheritance of Traditional Dong Crafts in a Contemporary Setting

In recent years, with the acceleration of societal development and globalization, traditional Dong crafts face unprecedented challenges [3]. On one hand, the demand and influence of traditional

crafts have diminished due to modern lifestyles; on the other hand, the interest and sense of identity towards traditional culture among younger generations have gradually weakened[4-5]. Therefore, protecting and inheriting these precious cultural heritages in the context of modern society has become an urgent issue[6].

Although numerous studies, both domestic and international, have focused on the protection and inheritance of ethnic traditional crafts, most concentrate on preservation measures and inheritance methods, with few deeply exploring the perspective of cultural identity[7]. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the current state of Dong traditional crafts inheritance and exploring how strengthening cultural identity can facilitate dynamic inheritance, providing reference and insights for the protection and inheritance of traditional crafts of other ethnic groups[8].

## **2. The Historical Background and Overview of Dong Traditional Crafts**

Dong culture, with its profound historical roots and rich artistic heritage, considers traditional crafts as its core component[9]. These crafts not only carry the ethnic group's historical memories but also reflect the Dong people's unique understanding of aesthetics and skills. Key traditional crafts include weaving, wood carving, and silver jewelry making[10].

Weaving holds a special place in Dong culture. Its history is long, and the techniques are exquisite, passed down through hand-weaving. Dong women's woven fabrics and garments are not only technically proficient but also display unique ethnic styles and aesthetic concepts. These textiles are essential for daily life and serve as significant markers of social identity and cultural inheritance.

Wood carving is another important aspect of Dong culture, widely used in architectural decoration and daily utensils. Dong wood carvings are renowned for their intricate craftsmanship and rich cultural connotations. Beautiful wood carvings can be seen in Dong houses, bridges, and ancestral halls, reflecting the craftsmen's skills, religious beliefs, and social concepts.

Silver jewelry making is another gem of Dong traditional crafts. Dong silver jewelry, known for its exquisite design and craftsmanship, is not just a daily ornament but also a symbol of culture and social status. By wearing silver jewelry, the Dong people express their cultural identity and aesthetic preferences.

These traditional crafts are not only integral parts of Dong culture but also crucial carriers of ethnic identity and cultural recognition. However, with modernization, these crafts face several challenges, including breaks in skills transmission, changing market demands, and the impact of modern lifestyles, making the study and discussion of their dynamic inheritance increasingly important.

## **3. The Current State of Inheritance of Dong Traditional Crafts**

### **3.1 Current Inheritance Models**

In the inheritance of Dong traditional crafts, families and communities play a vital role. Rooted deeply in the social structure and cultural traditions of the Dong, inheritance is usually carried out through oral transmission and practical learning. Elders pass on their skills to the younger generation through everyday productive activities such as weaving, carving, or silver jewelry making. This traditional mode of education not only imparts skills but also strengthens cultural connections and identity among the ethnic group. However, this mode, relying on informal education and familial inheritance, faces challenges in modern society.

With the widespread modern education system, younger Dong generations are increasingly receiving modern education, impacting their learning and interest in traditional crafts. Modern education emphasizes theoretical knowledge and technological skills, often marginalizing traditional craft education. This leads to young people's lack of understanding and mastery of traditional crafts. Additionally, the modern education system rarely includes courses specifically dedicated to ethnic traditional crafts, indirectly causing a break in the transmission of traditional

skills.

Social changes and economic development also affect the inheritance model of traditional crafts. With economic growth and changes in lifestyle, the application of traditional crafts in daily life has gradually decreased. Many young people choose to leave their hometowns for better economic prospects, moving to cities for work and life, directly affecting the learning and inheritance of traditional crafts. Moreover, the influence of the market economy has led to the neglect of the commercial value of some traditional crafts, further exacerbating the difficulties in their inheritance.

### **3.2 Major Challenges Faced**

Dong traditional crafts face fierce market competition in the globalized economy. With the opening of global markets and the acceleration of commodity circulation, traditional crafts often struggle against mass-produced industrial products. Traditional works find it difficult to compete with modern industrial products in terms of production costs, efficiency, and price. Additionally, the marketing and branding of traditional crafts are relatively underdeveloped, making it hard to gain sufficient exposure and recognition in the vast market.

With rapid societal changes and the prevalence of modern lifestyles, the younger Dong generation's sense of identity and interest in traditional culture has gradually weakened. Modern education and living environments have reduced their opportunities to interact with and understand traditional crafts, leading to a weakened understanding and recognition of traditional culture. This cultural gap poses a severe threat to the dynamic inheritance of traditional crafts, as their survival and development depend on community members' participation and support.

Modern lifestyles also challenge the survival of traditional crafts. As life's pace quickens and lifestyles change, the practicality and demand for traditional crafts in daily life decrease. Furthermore, obtaining raw materials for some crafts has become difficult, with certain materials becoming hard to acquire due to environmental protection policies and resource depletion. These factors collectively pose a severe challenge to the transmission of traditional craft-making techniques and products.

### **3.3 Opportunities and Development Trends**

In recent years, as society has increasingly valued cultural diversity and ethnic traditions, governments and civil organizations have invested more effort in cultural protection. This offers new opportunities for the protection and inheritance of Dong traditional crafts. Policy support, financial aid, and the implementation of cultural protection projects provide a solid foundation for the preservation of traditional crafts. Additionally, recognizing traditional crafts as intangible cultural heritage helps raise public awareness of their value.

Reforms in the education system and the establishment of public platforms create new possibilities for the inheritance of traditional crafts. Integrating traditional craft education into school curricula and community activities can stimulate the younger generation's interest and participation in traditional crafts. Meanwhile, through exhibitions, seminars, and cultural festivals, public awareness and appreciation of traditional crafts can be enhanced, supporting their transmission and development.

The application of modern technology and marketing strategies provides new pathways for the inheritance and development of traditional crafts. Modern marketing methods, such as online platforms, e-commerce, and social media, can expand the market coverage and audience for traditional crafts. Simultaneously, using modern design and manufacturing techniques, traditional crafts can be innovatively adapted to meet modern consumers' needs and aesthetics, enhancing their market competitiveness (figure 2).

With the advancement of globalization, international exchanges and cooperation offer new opportunities for the inheritance and promotion of Dong traditional crafts. Participation in international art exhibitions, cultural exchange activities, and collaborative projects not only showcases the unique charm of Dong culture but also attracts more interest and support for these traditional crafts. International cooperation also helps learn from the experiences of other cultures, providing new ideas for the protection and development of local traditional crafts.

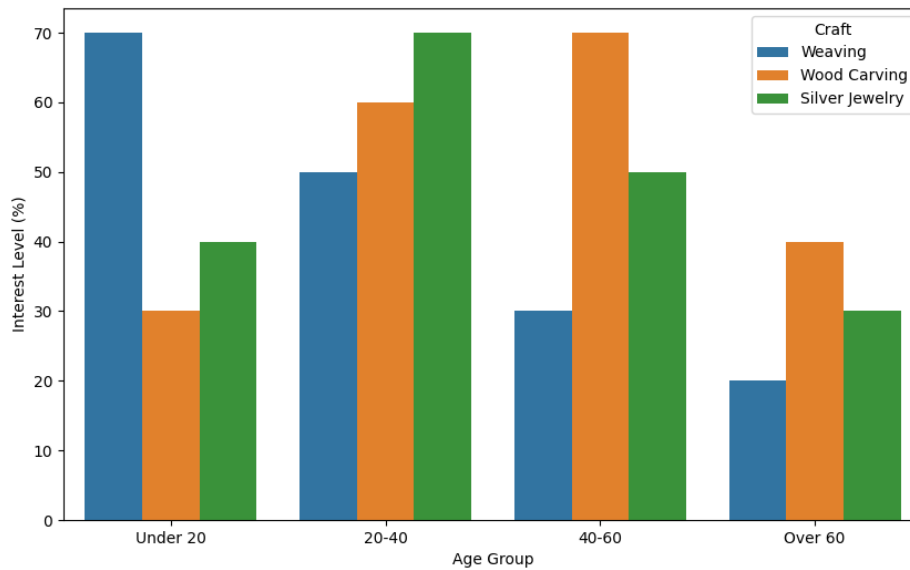


Figure 2 Interest in Dong Traditional Crafts Across Different Age Groups

#### 4. Strategies for Inheritance from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

Firstly, it is essential to strengthen the sense of pride and identity in Dong communities regarding their cultural heritage. Through education and community activities, young generations' understanding and respect for traditional Dong culture and crafts can be reinforced. Traditional craft education can be included in school curricula, and community activities such as craft exhibitions, workshops, and traditional festivals can be organized to encourage young people to actively participate in and inherit their cultural heritage.

Strengthening intergenerational communication and cooperation is vital to connecting the younger generation with older craft masters. Organizing craft inheritance activities, such as apprenticeships, craft camps, and interactive teaching, can effectively transfer traditional knowledge and skills from older generations to the young. This exchange is not only about skill transmission but also about passing on cultural values and life philosophies.

Combining traditional crafts with modern lifestyles and market demands is crucial to maintaining their relevance and vitality in contemporary society. This may include innovating traditional crafts to adapt to the modern market or developing new usage scenarios to increase their appeal. Simultaneously, using digital marketing and e-commerce platforms can push traditional craft products to a broader market.

Promoting cultural exchange and international cooperation in the context of globalization is critical for enhancing the international influence of Dong traditional crafts. Participating in international exhibitions, cultural festivals, and exchange projects not only showcases the unique charm of Dong culture but also stimulates more interest and support for these traditional crafts. International cooperation also aids in learning from other cultures' inheritance experiences, providing new perspectives for the protection and development of local traditional crafts.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study, from the perspective of cultural identity, analyzed the living inheritance of Dong ethnic traditional craftsmanship and proposed a series of strategies and recommendations to address the current challenges and leverage existing opportunities. The research emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural identity in the context of living heritage. Enhancing ethnic cultural pride through education and community activities and increasing the younger generation's understanding and identification with traditional culture are fundamental to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship. Additionally, promoting intergenerational exchange and cooperation is essential to

ensure the effective transmission of skills and knowledge.

This study suggests integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern lifestyles and market demands. By innovating and adapting, traditional craftsmanship can remain relevant and attractive in modern society. Utilizing modern technologies such as digital marketing and e-commerce can expand the market reach of traditional craft products. Cultural exchange and international cooperation are crucial for enhancing the international influence of Dong ethnic traditional craftsmanship. Participating in international events and collaborative projects can not only showcase the uniqueness of Dong culture but also attract more people interested in traditional craftsmanship.

In the face of rapidly changing social and economic environments, this study believes that continuous attention and support for the living inheritance of Dong ethnic traditional craftsmanship are of paramount importance. Governments, communities, educational institutions, and cultural organizations should work together to create favorable conditions for the protection and development of traditional craftsmanship. This study provides a new perspective and insights for understanding and preserving the traditional craftsmanship of minority ethnic groups like the Dong, and it holds significant theoretical and practical importance for promoting the living inheritance of ethnic cultural heritage.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors acknowledge the Guangxi Vocational Education Teaching Reform Research Project in 2021:<Exploration and Practice of Innovating the Collaborative Platform of "School-Village Integration" to Cultivate Talents for "Rural Revitalisation">(Item No.GXGZJG2021B180)

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