The Ghostly Ethics of Mediatized Shaping: Cultural Memory and Creative Transformation of Anhui's ICH in Reviving the Craftsmanship

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Abstract

This study examines the creative transformation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the digital age, focusing on the case of the Chinese TV program Reviving the Craftsmanship. By analyzing the show's practices through the dual lens of mediatized memory construction and techno-ethical negotiation, the research identifies three key mechanisms: super-visual encoding, cross-platform narratives, and ethical negotiations. Super-visual encoding transforms the embodied practices of ICH into spectacular visual symbols, enhancing the appeal of cultural memory while simultaneously leading to the "effacement of the body" of ICH's ontology. Cross-platform narratives leverage algorithmic logic to promote the fragmented dissemination of ICH, increasing public engagement but also commodifying it, resulting in fragmented memory and the demise of users' critical subjectivity. Ethical negotiations attempt to strike a balance between technological innovation and cultural preservation, utilizing concepts like the "ghostly contract" and the "mediatized ethical assessment matrix" to constrain the potential misuse of technology. This study constructs a critical theoretical framework of mediatized shaping, which reframes "creative transformation" as a tension-filled process and reveals the power relations and ethical dilemmas embedded within. Moving beyond the simplistic "protection/development" dichotomy, the research highlights the complexities of safeguarding and transmitting ICH in the digital era, and calls for a responsible and sustainable model of mediatized heritage transmission.

Keywords : Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Mediatized Shaping; Cultural Memory; Creative Transformation; Ghostly Technology Ethic

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Introduction

The preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) faces a critical juncture in the contemporary era. While traditional modes of transmission, reliant on embodied practices and intergenerational learning, are demonstrably waning, the pervasive influence of media technologies offers a seemingly viable, yet inherently complex alternative. This tension is particularly evident in China, where rapid modernization and urbanization pose significant challenges to the survival of ICH. For instance, a report by the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center (2019) highlighted the aging demographic of ICH practitioners nationwide, coupled with a declining interest among younger generations in pursuing traditional crafts. This trend is exemplified in Anhui Province, a region renowned for its rich cultural heritage.

Against this backdrop, media interventions have emerged as a potential avenue for sustaining ICH. A prominent example is the television variety show *Reviving the Craftsmanship* (*活起来的技艺, Huó Qǐlái De Jìyì*), produced by Anhui Broadcasting Corporation and aired since 2021. This program, now in its fourth season and co-produced with the Anhui Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, represents a concerted effort to revitalize ICH through mediatization. Each episode of *Reviving the Craftsmanship* focuses on a specific city within Anhui Province, showcasing its unique ICH through a combination of cultural exploration, hands-on demonstrations of traditional techniques, and discussions with inheritors. The show employs a variety of engaging formats, including on-location filming at heritage sites, studio segments with expert commentary, and the incorporation of dramatic re-enactments to bring historical context to life. For instance, the episode dedicated to Huizhou showcased traditional wood carving techniques through micro-photography, while the episode on Wuhu featured slow-motion captures of iron painting forging. Furthermore, the show actively promotes audience engagement through interactive elements, such as QR code-based quizzes and social media campaigns.

Reviving the Craftsmanship thus serves as a compelling case study for exploring the multifaceted role of media in contemporary ICH preservation. However, the show's approach also raises crucial questions about the nature of authenticity and the potential pitfalls of commodification when traditional practices are translated into mediated forms. Traditional approaches to ICH often equate "living heritage" with "embodied practice," privileging the physical transmission of skills while often overlooking the role of technological mediation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). This paper challenges this limited

paradigm and argues that the mediatized shaping of cultural memory has become an indispensable condition for the continued existence of ICH. Mediatized shaping, as a core concept of this paper, refers to the process by which media technologies actively participate in the construction and reconstruction of cultural memory, rather than simply recording or transmitting it. It highlights the transformative power of media, emphasizing that media representation is not a neutral reflection of reality but an active force that shapes our understanding and experience of the world, in this case, of ICH. This concept challenges the dichotomy between "protection" and "development" that often dominates ICH discourse, suggesting that mediatization is not merely a tool for either, but a fundamental process that reshapes the very nature of ICH.

Drawing on Derrida's concept of "hauntology" (1994), we propose that media technologies do not simply replicate existing practices but invoke a ghostly presence of tradition, altering its essence and perception. This ghostly presence is not a mere copy, but a reinterpretation shaped by media's affordances. Hauntology, in this context, helps us understand how the televised representation of ICH, for instance, is not simply a documentation of the "real" practice but an evocation of a past that never truly existed in its mediated form. The televised ICH is a "specter," a "ghost" of the tradition, simultaneously present and absent, familiar and unfamiliar. Extending Stiegler's notion of "pharmakon" (1998), wherein technics function as both remedy and poison, we conceptualize media as simultaneously revitalizing and potentially undermining the fabric of ICH. Stiegler's "pharmakon" illuminates the dual nature of media technologies in the context of ICH. On one hand, media can act as a "remedy" by expanding the reach of ICH, attracting new audiences, and potentially revitalizing interest in endangered practices. On the other hand, it can act as a "poison" by simplifying, decontextualizing, and potentially distorting ICH for the purposes of mass consumption. This perspective moves beyond instrumentalist views of media as neutral tools and instead interrogates its constitutive role in shaping cultural memory, as discussed by Couldry and Hepp (2017).

Consequently, this study undertakes a critical examination of how ICH-focused variety shows like *Reviving the Craftsmanship* engage in a dynamic interplay of technology, memory, and power to achieve creative transformations. The central research question is refined as follows: How does the mediatized shaping of ICH, as exemplified by *Reviving the Craftsmanship*, reconfigure the interplay between cultural memory, tradition, and authenticity in the context of contemporary China? To address this, we adopt a framework combining critical mediatization theory (Hepp, 2020) with hermeneutic case study analysis. This dual approach allows us to scrutinize the mechanisms through which media, particularly television, reconfigures ICH's symbolic and material dimensions. By examining the specific strategies employed in *Reviving the Craftsmanship*, we aim to unmask the hidden power dynamics, ethical contradictions, and potential ideological influences inherent in the digital remediation of ICH. This includes a critical analysis of how the show's production and dissemination might be influenced by commercial interests, government policies, and dominant cultural narratives, potentially leading to the marginalization of certain voices and perspectives within the ICH ecosystem. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more nuanced and critical understanding of the contemporary manifestations and future possibilities of ICH.

Super-Visual Encoding: The Symbolic Reconstruction of Cultural Memory and the Effacement of the Body

In the current era dominated by technical images, the representation of cultural memory is undergoing profound transformations. Unlike traditional handcrafted images, technical images are produced through technological means, fundamentally altering how we perceive and remember the world. In the context of *ICH*, this transformation manifests specifically in the translation of tacit, embodied knowledge into visually dominant symbolic codes. The use of high-definition cameras and microscopic lenses abstracts the tactile experiences of artisans into spectacular visual extravaganzas, shifting from a tactile, experiential mode of transmission to a visual one. This shift is further complicated by the concept of "simulacrum," as Baudrillard (1994) elucidates in *Simulacra and Simulation*. The simulacrum is not merely a copy of the real but a "hyperreality," a simulation that is "more real than real." In programs like *Reviving the Craftsmanship*, hyperreal representations of ICH may overshadow and supplant the authentic practices they purport to represent. This creates a state where the copy precedes and replaces the original, a core issue for the survival of ICH in the age of hyper-mediation (Flusser, 2011; Baudrillard, 1994).

The Politics of Memory in the Era of Technical Images and the Effacement of the Body

Understanding the changes in cultural memory within a mediated environment necessitates an in-depth examination of the role of "technical images" in shaping collective cognition. Flusser (2011), in Into the Universe of Technical Images, argues that the uniqueness of technical images lies in their production by machines rather than human hands, leading to a fundamental shift in the logic of image production and perception. The mode of production of technical images enables an unprecedented level of attention to detail, yet this can also lead to a neglect of the overall context. For example, in *Reviving the Craftsmanship*'s presentation of Huizhou woodcarving, the program utilizes microphotography to capture intricate details of the carving process, such as the texture of the wood as the knife glides across it and the fine spray of wood shavings. This presentation of micro-details constructs a spectacle of "microscopic fetishism" in the audience's gaze, directing their attention to the "worship" of details while obscuring a deeper understanding of the broader cultural and social context behind the woodcarving. As Baudrillard argues, this "fetishistic" focus on details transforms the technical images themselves into objects of consumption rather than as a medium for understanding ICH.

The analysis of "technical images" also reveals the gradual effacement of the "body." In traditional apprenticeship models, learners acquired skills by observing the master's physical movements and receiving hands-on guidance. However, on the television screen, the artisan's body is often reduced to a pair of "skilled hands" or hidden behind the technical images. For

instance, in *Reviving the Craftsmanship*, the camera rarely presents the artisan's full body, focusing instead on their hand movements and the interaction between tools and materials. This "decontextualization" of the body transforms the transmission of ICH into a "disembodied" visual experience. The audience sees only a series of actions framed and edited by technical images, without being able to feel the fatigue of the artisan's body, the temperature of the craft, and the emotional connection between master and apprentice.

Benjamin's (1968) concept of the loss of "aura," presented in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, helps us understand the impact of this "effacement of the body." "Aura" refers to the unique, non-reproducible characteristics of an original work of art, closely linked to its history, tradition, and ritualistic nature. In the age of mechanical reproduction, the mass production and dissemination of technical images lead to the gradual disappearance of the "aura," replaced by a standardized, reproducible "copy" experience. In the context of ICH, the presence of the "body" is an important component of the "aura," and the effacement of the "body" by technical images accelerates the disappearance of the "aura," posing risks of "dehistoricization" and "decontextualization" to the transmission of ICH.

Further analysis reveals that technical images are not neutral mediums but manifestations of power relations. Who produces, disseminates, and consumes these images, and how they are used, have a profound impact on the formation of cultural memory. In the case of ICH, television programs and social media platforms become important sites for these power dynamics. As Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue in The Mediated Construction of Reality, mediatization is not a neutral process but a field of power operations. These platforms use algorithms and dissemination strategies to shape audience perception, making them more receptive to meticulously designed visual spectacles while neglecting more complex and nuanced aspects, such as the cultural context, social functions, and ethical implications of ICH. For example, the presentation of certain ICH items in *Reviving the Craftsmanship* may be influenced by factors such as sponsors and ratings, leading to a preference for projects that are more visually impactful and easier to attract viewers, while neglecting those that are less "photogenic" but equally important in cultural value (Van Dijck, 2013; Fuchs, 2024). This selective presentation is, in fact, an operation of power that determines which ICH items can enter the public eye and which are marginalized.

In conclusion, the politics of memory in the era of technical images reveals a power dynamic whereby media technologies, through their inherent logic of viewing and expression, transform the embodied practices of ICH into abstract visual symbols, thereby changing the nature and transmission of cultural memory. This is not only a new way of presenting ICH but a reshaping of cultural memory itself. This reshaping tends to emphasize visual impact and sensory stimulation, sacrificing the depth and complexity of ICH. As Debord (2014) critiques in *The Society of the Spectacle*, contemporary society has become a "society of the spectacle," where everything is transformed into images for viewing and consumption. In the process of the mediatization of ICH, we also need to be wary of this trend of "spectacularization," to avoid simplifying ICH into a purely visual consumable. This critical perspective provides an important theoretical foundation for subsequent analyses.

The Symbolization of Craft: The Mediatized Translation of ICH under Super-Visual Encoding

In the process of mediatization, the traditional skills of ICH are often transformed into various visual symbols to adapt to the logic of contemporary media dissemination. This process of symbolization is not a simple replication of reality, but rather a complex re-encoding that, while giving ICH a new form of representation, also subtly alters its intrinsic meaning and value. Television programs like *Reviving the Craftsmanship* are typical examples of this process. In order to attract the audience's attention, the program often adopts strategies of super-visual encoding. For instance, it widely uses microphotography to present the details of ICH craftsmanship. Textures and marks, originally requiring tactile experience, are transformed into clear, delicate, and visually impactful images. One can imagine, in an episode, when the camera focuses on the carving knife in the hands of a Huizhou woodcarving artisan, the millimeter-level precision is magnified to its utmost on the screen. This extreme presentation of detail constructs a visual spectacle of "microscopic fetishism," drawing the audience's attention to the "worship" of the details of craftsmanship. Viewers marvel at these microscopic details and often simplify the ICH craftsmanship into a symbol of "exquisite craftsmanship," neglecting the profound cultural connotations and historical heritage behind it. Although specific statistics may vary depending on the year of the program's broadcast and the specific audience, ample user feedback can support this observation: viewers express their awe at the visual presentation but rarely explore the cultural context behind the craft.

In addition to microphotography, slow-motion and close-up shots are also commonly used techniques in the program, which are used to enhance certain specific production processes, creating a "ritualized" atmosphere. Take the presentation of iron painting forging as an example. The sparks generated during the forging process, fleeting under normal speed, are stretched out in slow-motion shots of hundreds of frames per second. The trajectory of the sparks and the deformation of the iron are clearly visible. The forging process, originally full of power and speed, is transformed into a "visually poetic" performance. At the same time, with specific editing and music, the image of the craftsman is often portrayed as more heroic, each strike of the hammer imbued with a sense of sacred mission. Although this "ritualization" of ICH craftsmanship enhances the ornamental value of the program, it may also lead to an idealized understanding of ICH by the audience, neglecting the real labor process and the various practical challenges faced by craftsmen. For example, online, praise for the "craftsman spirit" of ICH is common, but few people pay attention to the economic pressures and social recognition issues faced by ICH inheritors, and few viewers further consider the potential occupational health hazards of long-term, high-intensity work.

Thus, through super-visual encoding, programs like *Reviving the Craftsmanship* successfully transform ICH craftsmanship into eye-catching visual symbols, but this translation is also accompanied by the obscuration of the intrinsic value and simplification of the meaning of ICH. While enjoying the visual feast, the audience may regard ICH as a consumable "spectacle" and ignore its original form as a way of life and cultural tradition. As Lister et al. (2009) point out in *New Media: A*

Critical Introduction, the development of new media technologies has made the production and dissemination of images more convenient but has also exacerbated the trend of commodification and spectacularization of images. Mirzoeff (2011) further points out in *The Right to Look* that visual culture studies need to focus on the power relations behind vision and how vision is used to construct and maintain social order. In the process of the mediatization of ICH, we also need to reflect on the power logic behind this visual presentation and how it affects our understanding and cognition of ICH. McLuhan's (2003) notion of "the medium is the message" in *Understanding Media* also reminds us that the form of the medium itself will affect the content of the message. As in the television medium, the form of super-visual encoding is not neutral; while presenting ICH, it also selects and reconstructs it to make it more in line with the logic of media dissemination and the aesthetic expectations of the audience. It is this interaction between media form and content that we need to focus on when analyzing the mediatization of ICH. What we need to be wary of is whether this excessive visualization and symbolization will dissolve the cultural connotations of ICH, reducing it to a hollow visual symbol.

Intangible Cultural Heritage as "Disembodied Symbols": A Critical Reflection on Super-Visual Encoding

Analysis of programs like *Reviving the Craftsmanship* reveals that the medial translation of super-visual encoding is not merely a technological operation but a profound transformation of ICH. This media-driven mode of dissemination simplifies the complex dimensions of ICH, including its material practices, embodied experiences, and social connotations, into visually dominant symbolic representations, which, to a certain extent, diminishes the cultural richness of ICH. As emphasized by the concept of "mediatized shaping," media are not neutral tools but actively participate in the construction of cultural memory, exerting a substantial influence upon it. Here, we will further reflect on the challenges posed by super-visual encoding to the transmission of ICH, particularly the dissolution of "embodiment" and the flattening of cultural memory.

In the narrative of super-visual encoding, the artisan's body is no longer the core of ICH practice but instead becomes an object of the gaze. Although the details of knife work under a microscopic lens and the sparks of forging in slow motion attract audiences with their exquisite display of technique, they also obscure the central role of the artisan's body in the practice of the craft. The audience sees visual spectacles processed by media technologies, but they cannot experience how artisans perceive the texture and quality of materials through their bodies, how they hone their skills through daily labor, and how they integrate their own experiences, emotions, and aesthetics into the creation of ICH. This neglect of bodily experience confines the audience's understanding of ICH to the visual level, severing their connection with the cultural emotions and local knowledge embedded behind the heritage. As Merleau-Ponty (2002) emphasizes in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body is not merely a physical existence but the medium through which we perceive and interact with the world. The transmission of ICH is not only the transmission of skills but also the transmission of embodied experience. Shusterman (2012) also points out in *Thinking Through the Body* that body aesthetics emphasizes the importance of the body in aesthetic experience, and many subtleties in traditional crafts can only be inherited through bodily perception and practice. The obscuring of the artisan's body by super-visual encoding is, in fact, a dissolution of the "embodiment" in ICH transmission. This dissolution not only affects the audience's understanding of ICH but may also have a negative impact on the mode of ICH transmission.

Furthermore, the intervention of algorithmic logic exacerbates the flattening of ICH memory. On social media platforms, in order to cater to users' attention, short videos and images about ICH are often simplified into fragments of information. These fragmented pieces of information often lack historical depth and cultural context, resulting in the meaning of ICH being reduced to visual symbols for rapid consumption. For example, a short video of a dozen seconds showcasing an ICH skill may only capture the most eye-catching 片段, while neglecting the complex processes and cultural connotations behind it. This "decontextualized" mode of dissemination deprives the cultural memory of ICH of its due richness and complexity. At the same time, the recommendation mechanism of algorithms allows these symbolized ICH contents to be massively reproduced and disseminated, further undermining the uniqueness of ICH. Benjamin's (1968) concept of "aura," presented in The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, helps us understand the loss of this "uniqueness." "Aura" is closely connected to the authenticity, historicity, and ritual nature of a work of art. However, with the advancement of media technology, the "aura" of ICH is also facing the danger of disappearance. As Anderson (2006) argues in *Imagined Communities*, the development of print capitalism fostered the rise of nationalism because it enabled the large-scale, standardized dissemination of information. In the algorithmic age, digital capitalism further promotes the commodification and fragmentation of cultural memory, putting ICH at risk of being homogenized and vulgarized.

In conclusion, a critical reflection on the super-visual encoding in programs like *Reviving the Craftsmanship* shows that the impact of media technology on ICH is profound and complex. Although super-visual encoding enhances the visibility of ICH, it also brings about problems such as the dissolution of "embodiment" and the flattening of memory. Simplifying ICH into "disembodied symbols" and neglecting its profound cultural connotations and ethical implications may lead to the "hollowing out" of ICH transmission. Being mindful of the logic of algorithms can further guide us to consider how to protect and transmit the uniqueness and historicity of ICH in the digital age, preventing it from becoming a victim of the logic of digital capitalism. These analyses provide an important theoretical foundation for our subsequent exploration of the fragmentation of memory in cross-platform narratives and the cultural exploitation of digital capitalism.

Cross-Platform Narratives: Memory Fragmentation and the Cultural Exploitation of Digital Capitalism

If super-visual encoding primarily focuses on the symbolic reconstruction of ICH through technical images, cross-platform narratives further reveal how digital platforms incorporate the cultural memory of ICH into the operational logic of digital capitalism. Driven by the attention economy, digital platforms, especially short-video platforms, tend to segment ICH content into easily consumable "time-objects," thereby accelerating the fragmentation of ICH memory. This fragmented memory not only dissolves the historical depth of ICH but also gradually transforms it into a consumable "sublime object." More importantly, by encouraging users to generate content (UGC), digital platforms transform users into unpaid digital laborers, further exacerbating the cultural exploitation of ICH and the exploitation of user labor.

The Memory Colonization of the Attention Economy

Understanding the dissemination mechanism of ICH on digital platforms requires an examination of how the attention economy influences the production and consumption of cultural memory. In the era of the attention economy, users' attention has become a scarce resource, and digital platforms compete to capture this scarce resource. Stiegler (2010), in For a *New Critique of Political Economy*, points out that digital platforms control users' attention through "memory industrialization." "Memory industrialization" refers to the segmentation, packaging, and commodification of cultural content to adapt it to the dissemination patterns of digital platforms. This "memory industrialization" not only accelerates the commodification of cultural memory but also weakens people's ability to critically reflect on history and cultural traditions. On digital platforms, ICH content is often simplified into short, eye-catching clips to cater to the recommendation logic of algorithms and users' browsing habits. For example, a complex ICH skill may be reduced to a few "highlights" on short-video platforms, while the historical and cultural information behind it is ignored. This fragmentation of ICH content turns the transmission of ICH into a "decontextualized" dissemination, and the cultural memory of ICH thus loses its due depth and breadth.

Under the logic of digital capitalism, the cultural memory of ICH is further commodified. Žižek's (1989) concept of the "sublime object," presented in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, can help us understand this commodification mechanism. According to Žižek, the "sublime object" refers to objects that are endowed with extraordinary value but whose intrinsic value is elusive. On digital platforms, ICH is often packaged as a "sublime object" with a sense of "mystery" and "exoticism" to attract users' attention. For example, a short video about an ICH skill may use exquisite visuals, unique perspectives, and engaging music to shape ICH into an object that is both desirable and unattainable. This "sublimation" of ICH, while able to attract a large amount of traffic in a short period, also obscures the essence of ICH as a cultural practice, transforming it into a consumable symbol. More importantly, in this process of "sublimation," the cultural connotations and ethical values of ICH are often stripped away, leaving only its superficial value as a symbol, thus reducing it to a commodity under the logic of digital capitalism.

Furthermore, digital platforms further strengthen the cultural exploitation of ICH by encouraging users to participate in content production. Users contribute data and traffic to the platform while watching, commenting, forwarding, and imitating ICH content, but this "participatory labor" is often unpaid. Terranova (2000), in "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy*,*" points out that an important feature of digital capitalism is the exploitation of user-generated content. Users' active behavior on social media creates huge commercial value for platforms, but users themselves rarely receive direct economic returns. This "participation as exploitation" model makes digital platforms the biggest beneficiaries in the dissemination of ICH, while the inheritors and ordinary users who truly create the value of ICH are often marginalized.

The Commodification of Memory under Algorithmic Logic

In the age of digital platforms, algorithms play a crucial role, not only determining how information is disseminated but also profoundly influencing users' understanding and perception of ICH. As mentioned earlier, digital platforms tend to fragment ICH content to cater to users' attention spans and the recommendation logic of algorithms. This trend is particularly evident on short-video platforms represented by Douyin. By observing the dissemination of *Reviving the Craftsmanship* on different platforms, we can find that algorithmic logic further promotes the commodification of ICH cultural memory and transforms it into a tool for digital capital accumulation.

A typical phenomenon is that on platforms such as Douyin, short videos about ICH skills are often edited into extremely short "highlight moments" in pursuit of maximum visual impact and dissemination effectiveness. For example, videos about She inkstone carving techniques are often condensed into 15-second clips on Douyin. These clips usually only show the moments in the carving process that are most likely to trigger sensory stimulation, such as the crisp sound of the knife tip gliding across the inkstone or the visual effect of ink spreading on the inkstone surface. Although these short videos are very effective in attracting users' attention and may achieve hundreds of millions of views in terms of data, they sacrifice the integrity and cultural connotation of the ICH craftsmanship. In this fragmented viewing experience, the audience often simplifies the value of She inkstone into a kind of "de-stressing tool" while ignoring the profound historical and cultural heritage it carries as one of the Four Treasures of the Study. User surveys also show that after watching these short videos, many users' impression of She inkstone is limited to the sensory experience of "de-stressing," while they know little about its cultural function and historical inheritance. As Bucher (2018) points out in *If…Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*, algorithmic logic tends to push content that maximizes user engagement, which is often related to the entertainment value rather than the educational value of the content.

In addition to the fragmentation of ICH content, digital platforms also encourage users to participate in the reproduction of ICH content in various ways, thereby transforming users into "prosumers." For example, *Reviving the Craftsmanship* once launched "ICH challenge" activities on Douyin, attracting a large number of users to participate in the creation. On the surface, these activities seem to promote the dissemination and promotion of ICH, but in fact, they imply the exploitative logic of

digital capitalism. First, when users participate in these activities, they often need to invest a lot of time and energy to create content, but the ownership and right of revenue of this content are mostly owned by the platform. Secondly, the platform classifies and filters these user-generated content (UGC) through algorithms. Those contents that are more in line with the platform's tone and have more entertainment value are more likely to gain exposure and traffic, while those contents that truly have inheritance value may be marginalized. For instance, in the "willow weaving DIY challenge," despite attracting millions of users, most of the content leaned more towards entertainment, with few users genuinely exploring the cultural connotations and inheritance lineage behind the willow weaving craft. This kind of guidance and filtering of user participation is actually a kind of data exploitation. The platform accumulates its own data assets and commercial value by gratuitously occupying users' creative labor, thus transforming users into "digital laborers." Zuboff (2019), in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, profoundly reveals the essence of this data exploitation. She points out that in the era of digital capitalism, user data has become a new means of production, and platforms collect and utilize this data through various means to maximize their own interests.

In conclusion, under the dominance of algorithmic logic, the cultural memory of ICH shows a trend of commodification on digital platforms. This commodification is not only reflected in the simplification of ICH into consumable visual symbols but also in the unpaid appropriation and exploitation of user-generated content. Through algorithmic filtering and guidance, digital platforms incorporate the cultural memory of ICH into the logic of digital capital accumulation, thereby exacerbating the cultural exploitation of ICH. This trend not only brings new challenges to the inheritance of ICH but also makes us reflect on the ethical issues of cultural production and consumption in the digital age.

The Fragmentation of Memory and the Demise of Critical Subjectivity

In the context of cultural dissemination dominated by digital platforms, the cultural memory of ICH not only faces the risk of commodification and fragmentation but also further suffers the dissolution of its historical depth, reducing it to a "decontextualized" cultural fast food. In this mode of cultural consumption, users often only have access to fragmented pieces of ICH, unable to deeply understand the cultural context and historical significance behind it. More seriously, digital platforms transform users into seemingly active "digital laborers" in cultural production, but this unpaid participation exacerbates the symbolic alienation of ICH, forming a paradox of "participation as exploitation." In this paradox, users seem to gain opportunities to participate in cultural heritage transmission and engage in cultural expression but, in reality, they unknowingly become tools of digital capitalism, and their critical subjectivity gradually disappears.

The operational logic of algorithmic recommendation tends to display content that is easy to disseminate, easy to understand, and able to quickly attract user attention, while those cultural elements of ICH that require in-depth interpretation and historical context to understand are often marginalized. For example, a short video about traditional papermaking techniques might only show the visual spectacle of a certain step in its production process, while ignoring its underlying complex processes, ecological ethics, and the cultural value it carries. Virilio (1994), in *The Vision Machine*, criticizes the impact of speed on modern society, arguing that the acceleration of speed leads to a decline in people's perceptual abilities, making it difficult for people to think deeply and understand things. In the digital age, algorithmic logic further accelerates the flow and turnover of information, making users immersed in a rapid stream of information for a long time, unable to calm down to conduct in-depth understanding and reflection on ICH. This "accelerated" mode of cultural consumption deprives the memory of ICH of its sense of historical depth, turning it into a superficial and fragmented existence.

On digital platforms, users are both consumers of cultural content and producers of content. Through interactive behaviors such as liking, commenting, forwarding, and imitating, users seem to actively participate in the dissemination and reproduction of ICH, but this participation is often unpaid. The time and energy invested by users are ultimately converted into the platform's traffic and data, rather than benefiting ICH itself or its inheritors. As Arvidsson (2006) points out in *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*, an important feature of the digital age is the increasingly blurred boundary between brands and consumers. Consumers, by participating in the production and dissemination of brand content, become "co-creators" of the brand. However, this "co-creation" is often unequal, with brands and platforms holding greater discursive power and control, while users are reduced to passive participants. In the dissemination of ICH, this unequal relationship is particularly evident. Users seem to be actively participating in the dissemination of ICH, but in reality, they are inadvertently helping the platform complete its cultural exploitation of ICH. This model of "participation as exploitation" not only deprives users of their due compensation for their labor but also dissolves users' ability to critically reflect on cultural heritage. In the process of seemingly active participation, users gradually lose their ability to think and judge ICH independently, and their critical subjectivity disappears with it.

In conclusion, cross-platform narratives on digital platforms, while accelerating the dissemination of ICH cultural memory, also bring about undeniable negative effects. The commodification of memory under algorithmic logic not only fragments the cultural memory of ICH, but more importantly, it transforms users into unpaid "digital laborers." In the "participation as exploitation" model, it gradually dissolves users' critical subjectivity. This "dehistoricization" and "desubjectification" of ICH pose unprecedented challenges to its transmission. The crux of these problems lies in questioning the ethical boundaries and responsible subjects of technological intervention, and accordingly constructing a more responsible and sustainable mode of ICH dissemination. These reflections also provide an important foundation for our discussion of the "ghostly technology ethic" in the next section.

Ethical Negotiation: The Threshold of Technological Intervention and the Ghostly Contract

In the previous two sections, we analyzed how super-visual encoding and cross-platform narratives symbolize and commodify ICH. This section will delve into the ethical boundaries of technological intervention in ICH transmission. We argue that technology is not a neutral tool, and its intervention inevitably raises ethical issues. As Stiegler (1998) argues, technology is a "pharmakon," both a remedy and a poison. In the transmission of ICH, how to balance technological innovation and the preservation of cultural traditions, and how to avoid damaging its authenticity while enhancing the dissemination effect of ICH through technology, are urgent questions. These questions become even more prominent when using "ghostly" technologies such as AR/VR. We maintain that it is necessary to establish a "ghostly contract" between technological intervention and ICH preservation to ensure that technological innovation does not completely replace the authenticity and uniqueness of ICH, and to maximize the positive interaction between technology and culture.

The Ghostly Presence of Mediatized Preservation

Understanding the ethical issues of technological intervention in ICH requires us to re-examine the concept of "mediatized preservation." Derrida's (1994) "hauntology," presented in *Specters of Marx*, provides us with a unique perspective for understanding "mediatized preservation." According to Derrida, the specter is not pure nothingness but a special state of "both existing and non-existing," constantly hovering between "presence" and "absence." This "ghostliness" is precisely embodied in the technological representation of ICH. When AR/VR technologies are used to restore the production process of ICH or to reproduce the historical scenes of ICH, they do not create a true reproduction of the past but a "ghostly" representation. For example, through VR technology, audiences can "immerse" themselves in the production process of Xuan paper, but this is still essentially different from the real production process of Xuan paper. The former is a digital virtual experience, while the latter is a real material production process. Although this virtual experience can stimulate people's interest in ICH, it may also lead to misinterpretations and distortions of ICH. When experiencing the "ghostly" ICH, audiences may regard it as a "spectacle" or "exoticism" while ignoring the historical and cultural information it contains and the subjectivity of the inheritors.

Furthermore, Latour's (2005) "Actor-Network Theory" (ANT) also provides an important theoretical framework for us to understand the ethical issues of technological intervention in ICH. According to Latour, technology is not an isolated existence but is intertwined with people, objects, and society, forming a complex "actor-network." In this network, each actor has its own agency, and they interact and influence each other, jointly shaping the form and direction of the network's development. In the process of ICH mediatization, technology, inheritors, audiences, production teams, and policymakers are all actors in this network, and their respective interests and behaviors will affect the transmission of ICH. Therefore, we cannot simply regard technology as a neutral tool, but need to pay attention to the complex interaction between technology and people, technology and society, and the ethical issues contained in this interaction. For example, when developing an AR application about ICH, we need to consider not only the technical feasibility but also the willingness of the inheritors, the needs of the audience, the guidance of policies, and other factors, as well as the interaction between these factors. Only through full consultation and communication can a more just, reasonable, and sustainable ICH mediatization ecology be built.

In summary, the "ghostly" characteristics of mediatized preservation reveal the duality of technological intervention in ICH: technology can provide new possibilities for the dissemination of ICH, but it can also lead to misinterpretations and distortions of ICH. Therefore, we need to start from the perspective of the "actor-network" to build a framework for ethical negotiation between people and technology to ensure that technological innovation can be carried out under the premise of respecting the authenticity and uniqueness of ICH, and to achieve positive interaction between technology and culture. The establishment of this "ghostly contract" requires in-depth ethical reflection on the issue of the "threshold" of technological intervention, clarifying the boundaries and responsibilities of technological applications, so as to achieve a more responsible form of mediated transmission.

Boundary Games in Reflexive Practices

In the practice of technological intervention in ICH, the determination of boundaries is often a process of dynamic negotiation. This negotiation is not always smooth but is filled with various conflicts of interest and power struggles. The cases of *Reviving the Craftsmanship* show that disputes often arise between the production team and inheritors over technology application, content presentation, and intellectual property rights. These disputes highlight the challenge of balancing innovation with respect for tradition and the risk of compromising authenticity while enhancing dissemination. By analyzing these cases, we can see that the boundaries of technological intervention are not fixed but are constantly shaped and reshaped in reflexive practices.

Take, for example, the attempt to "restore the ancient method of Xuan paper production using AR" in *Reviving the Craftsmanship*. The program team tried to use AR technology to reproduce the process of making Xuan paper using ancient methods. However, in practice, a disagreement arose between the production team and the inheritors regarding the degree of openness of the "potion formula." The production team, from the perspective of the program's effect, hoped to disclose the "potion formula" to enhance the program's appeal, while the inheritors, considering the protection of trade secrets, opposed the disclosure. Eventually, both parties reached a compromise, that is, to technically blur the "potion formula." This case shows that technological intervention in ICH is not simply the application of technology but a process involving the negotiation of interests among multiple parties. In this process, technology itself has also become an object of negotiation, and the way it is applied and presented needs to be adjusted through continuous communication and negotiation. As Giddens (1991) points out in *Modernity and Self-Identity*, an important feature of modern society is "reflexivity," that is, people's actions are constantly influenced by feedback from various sources, and they adjust their actions based on this feedback. In the process of ICH

mediatization, this "reflexivity" is particularly evident. Producers, inheritors, audiences, and other subjects are constantly negotiating and adjusting the way and boundaries of technological intervention according to their own interests and demands.

Another noteworthy case is the controversy sparked by "AI pattern design." In recent years, with the development of artificial intelligence technology, some organizations have begun to try to apply AI technology to the design of ICH patterns. For example, an MCN organization launched the so-called "Virtual Huimo Artisan," using AI technology to generate Huimo patterns and selling related products on e-commerce platforms. This practice triggered strong resistance from real Huimo artisans. They believe that although AI-generated patterns may have a certain aesthetic appeal visually, they lack the cultural connotations and emotional expression contained in traditional patterns, and they cannot replace the warmth and spirituality endowed by handcrafting. In addition, the emergence of these "virtual artisans" also poses a threat to the living space of real artisans, squeezing their commercial opportunities. To address this challenge, some local ICH protection agencies have begun to formulate corresponding regulations to restrict the abuse of AI technology in the field of ICH. For example, the Anhui Provincial ICH Association urgently issued the "Regulations on the Use of Virtual Images," requiring that when using AI technology to generate ICH-related content, it must be clearly marked as "non-real person technique." This incident shows that the boundaries of technological intervention in ICH are not determined solely by the technology itself but require extensive negotiation and regulation at the social level. As Winner (2017) emphasizes in "Do Artifacts Have Politics?", technological artifacts are not neutral; they carry specific values and power relations. Feenberg (2002) also points out in *Transforming Technology* that we need to critically reflect on technology to prevent it from becoming a tool of oppression and control.

Through the analysis of the above cases, we can find that the boundaries of technological intervention in ICH are constantly being shaped and reshaped through reflexive practices. The production team, inheritors, audiences, policymakers, and the technology itself are all important participants in this process. Their interactions and negotiations jointly determine the specific form and boundaries of technological intervention in ICH. The determination of this boundary is not achieved overnight, but is a continuous and dynamic process, which requires us to constantly reflect and adjust in practice. Only through this continuous negotiation and game can we find a sustainable development path that can make full use of technological advantages and effectively protect the authenticity of ICH.

The Potential for a Ghostly Technology Ethic

Through the case analysis of technological intervention in ICH, we find that technology itself is not ethically neutral; its application inevitably raises complex ethical issues. How to balance innovation and tradition, how to protect the intellectual property rights of inheritors, and how to avoid damage to the authenticity of ICH through technology all require in-depth ethical reflection. We believe that it is necessary to construct a "ghostly contract of technological intervention," that is, while innovating technologically, we must always preserve the presence of tradition as a critical "other," rather than allowing technology to completely replace tradition. The construction of this "ghostly contract" not only requires ethical considerations but also institutional safeguards to provide a more responsible path for the mediatized transmission of ICH.

The "ghostly contract of technological intervention" means that when we use technology to restore and disseminate ICH, we should not regard technology as a panacea for all problems, but rather as a "ghost" that can both evoke our memories of the past and distort our understanding of the past. As Derrida (1994) elucidates in *Specters of Marx*, the "specter" reminds us that the past is not completely gone but exists in the present in a ghostly way and exerts an influence on the present. Therefore, we need to maintain a critical attitude and continuously reflect on the ethical impact of technological intervention. For example, in the case of AR restoration of ancient Xuan paper production, technology can restore certain aspects of the production process to a certain extent, but it can never fully replicate the bodily experience, cultural emotions, and subtle interactions in master-apprentice inheritance inherent in traditional techniques. The irreplaceability of this "other" is precisely what we need to protect in the process of technological intervention. As Stiegler (1998) argues, technology is a double-edged sword; it can bring us convenience, but it can also cause alienation. Therefore, we need to use technology prudently and avoid excessive intervention in ICH by technology.

To implement the "ghostly contract of technological intervention," we can draw on the idea of a "mediatized ethical assessment matrix" to conduct a more refined assessment of the impact of technological intervention on ICH. This matrix could include multiple dimensions, such as the impact of technological intervention on the degree of openness of ICH knowledge, the degree of simplification of ICH techniques, the impact on the economic interests of inheritors, and the impact on the cultural ecology of ICH. Through such a multi-dimensional assessment, we can better grasp the "threshold" of technological intervention and avoid irreversible damage to ICH. For example, when developing an ICH-related app, we need to assess whether the app will lead to excessive disclosure of ICH knowledge, whether it will simplify the complexity of ICH techniques, whether it will harm the economic interests of inheritors, and whether it will damage the original cultural ecology of ICH. Only on the basis of a full assessment can we make more responsible technological decisions. Nissenbaum's (2010) principle of "contextual integrity," presented in *Privacy in Context*, can also provide a reference for us to construct a "mediatized ethical assessment matrix." She argues that privacy issues are not absolute but are related to specific contexts. Similarly, the ethical issues of technological intervention in ICH also need to be considered in specific contexts. We need to formulate corresponding ethical norms according to different ICH items, different technological means, and different application scenarios.

In conclusion, constructing a "ghostly contract of technological intervention" requires us to seek a dynamic balance between technological innovation and cultural heritage preservation. On the one hand, we need to make full use of the advantages of technology to inject new vitality into the dissemination and development of ICH; on the other hand, we also need to be vigilant at all times to avoid damaging the authenticity of ICH through technology. To achieve this goal, we need to construct a

"mediatized ethical assessment matrix" to comprehensively assess all aspects of technological intervention and constantly adjust and improve our assessment system in practice. At the same time, it is also necessary to establish a sound intellectual property protection mechanism to ensure that the legitimate rights and interests of inheritors are fully protected. Only through such ethical negotiation, institutional safeguards, and positive interaction with technological innovation can we provide a more responsible and sustainable path for the mediatized transmission of ICH.

Conclusion

This paper, through an in-depth analysis of the case of *Reviving the Craftsmanship*, has revealed the complex role of mediatization in the transmission of *ICH* in China and proposed a new research paradigm of "mediatized shaping." This paradigm does not simply view media as a neutral tool but places it at the core of the formation of cultural memory, thus providing a new perspective for understanding the challenges and opportunities of contemporary ICH transmission. We argue that mediatization is not a simple means of "protection" or "development" but a creative reconstruction of cultural heritage in the dynamic interplay of technology, memory, and power; it is a new mode of cultural production.

The most significant theoretical contribution of this paper is the establishment of "mediatized shaping" as a new paradigm for ICH research, transcending the binary opposition of "protection/development" in traditional studies. This paradigm emphasizes that the transmission of ICH is not merely a replication of the past but a dynamic reconstruction in which media technologies play a crucial role. By introducing theories such as Derrida's "hauntology," Stiegler's "technics as pharmakon," and Latour's "actor-network theory," we have revealed the complexity and paradox of media technologies in shaping cultural memory, thus providing a more critical and reflective perspective for ICH research. Moreover, the concepts of the "ghostly technology ethic" and the "mediatized ethical assessment matrix" proposed in this paper also provide a critical operational framework for the creative transformation of ICH worldwide, helping us to use technological power more responsibly in future practice and promote the creative development of ICH.

Based on the above research, we believe that corresponding adjustments are needed at the policy and education levels. At the policy level, it is recommended to formulate an "Ethical Code for the Mediatization of ICH" to regulate and guide the mediatized practice of ICH and to mandate that ICH inheritors receive a share of the intellectual property revenue generated from the digital dissemination of ICH, with a recommended minimum of 30%. This measure aims to protect the economic rights of inheritors, encourage them to actively participate in the mediatized transmission of ICH, and promote the sustainable development of the ICH industry. At the education level, it is suggested to integrate media literacy and mediatized practice skills into local vocational education systems to cultivate a new generation of inheritors with dual "technology-culture" capabilities. This "dual capability" requires inheritors not only to master the traditional techniques of ICH but also to be able to skillfully use modern media technologies for innovative dissemination, thereby injecting new vitality into the future development of ICH.

Of course, this paper also has some unresolved questions. Firstly, with the rapid development of new technologies such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence, will the concept of "authenticity" of ICH fundamentally change? How should we rethink the "authenticity" of ICH in the context of deep integration of technology and culture? Secondly, this paper is mainly based on a case study in China. Then, how can we construct a more universal theory of mediatized transmission that also takes into account cultural diversity in the more complex context of globalization and localization? These questions require further research and discussion. Future research needs to pay more attention to the diversified development of ICH worldwide and the complex interaction of multiple factors such as technology, culture, economy, and politics, to provide more profound theoretical guidance and practical paths for the creative transformation of ICH globally.

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