
Research on the Application of Artificial Intelligence in the Inheritance of Tie-Dye Craftsmanship

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Abstract: The inheritance of tie-dye craftsmanship faces challenges such as a talent gap, inefficiency, and insufficient innovation. This research explores systematic solutions provided by artificial intelligence (AI) technology. By constructing a multimodal knowledge graph integrating "artifact-organization-spirit" dimensions, the implicit experience of craftspeople can be transformed into explicit knowledge. Through an intelligent production line composed of visual recognition and industrial robots in a "human-machine collaboration" framework, efficiency and quality are significantly enhanced while preserving the artistry of manual work. Utilizing generative AI and immersive experience technologies can drive design innovation aligned with contemporary aesthetics and broaden dissemination channels. Practice demonstrates that AI applications can substantially improve industrial efficiency and cultural vitality. However, deeper implementation of technology still needs to address challenges such as the preservation of cultural semantics, data standardization, and ethical boundaries. In the future, promoting the deep integration of AI and intangible cultural heritage requires building an ecosystem that coordinates "technology-humanities-industry," ultimately achieving the "living" inheritance and sustainable development of traditional craftsmanship in the digital age.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Tie-Dye Craftsmanship; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Digital Inheritance; Human-Machine Collaboration

1. Introduction

Tie-dye, historically known as "Jiaoxie" (bound-resist dyeing), is an ancient craft that involves binding, stitching, or tying fabrics before dyeing to create hazy, gradient patterns^[1]. It is not only a gem of textile craftsmanship but also an intangible cultural heritage that carries regional culture and aesthetic traditions. However, under the impact of industrialization and modernization, its inheritance faces challenges such as shrinking living space and a lack of successors.

Meanwhile, modern technologies such as artificial intelligence provide new possibilities for the preservation and innovation of intangible cultural heritage. Introducing AI into tie-dye craftsmanship does not aim to replace manual work; instead, it seeks to break through the bottlenecks of traditional inheritance by means of technological "decoding" and "empowerment," thereby exploring a sustainable development path that both preserves cultural authenticity and stimulates contemporary vitality.

This study focuses on the application of artificial intelligence in the inheritance of tie-dye craftsmanship, systematically reviewing its technological principles, practical models, and associated outcomes and challenges. The paper will first analyze the inheritance dilemmas of traditional tie-dye, clarify the technological logic and pathways of AI intervention, and examine its applications across production, design, preservation, and dissemination through cutting-edge case studies. Finally, it will reflect on current challenges and explore future directions for the integration of "technology and culture," aiming to provide references for the modern inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

2. The Inheritance Dilemma and Digital Transformation Opportunities of Traditional Tie-Dye Craftsmanship

Traditional tie-dye craftsmanship relies on the master-apprentice model of oral transmission and mental guidance, along with the inheritance of "tactile" experience. While this approach proved effective in traditional societies, it now faces structural challenges in the contemporary era^[2].

The first challenge lies in the generational gap among inheritors and the endangered status of tacit

knowledge. The essence of tie-dye craftsmanship-particularly the symbolism in pattern design, dye formulations, the precise tension and tightness of bindings, as well as the control over dyeing duration and temperature-relies heavily on the "tacit knowledge" of individual artisans. Such knowledge is difficult to document accurately in written form, as what is often referred to as the "perfect timing" or the "right feel" depends entirely on accumulated experience. As older artisans advance in age, retire, or pass away, while younger generations lack the motivation to inherit the craft due to its long learning cycle and limited economic returns, the core techniques face the risk of being lost.

Secondly, production efficiency remains low. Purely manual production has limited capacity, high costs, and inconsistent quality, making it difficult to meet modern market demands such as fast fashion and personalized customization, thereby constraining large-scale development.

Furthermore, documentation methods are overly simplistic. Current preservation efforts predominantly focus on collecting finished works and recording them through images and texts, lacking effective means to capture dynamic aspects such as technical processes and cultural contexts. This results in an emphasis on "outcomes over processes, and forms over essence."

Finally, there is a lack of innovation momentum. Although traditional patterns possess historical value, they often fall out of step with modern aesthetics and diverse needs. Product design updates slowly, and their forms remain largely confined to traditional media, failing to integrate into contemporary life or broader application fields. As a result, they are often regarded as souvenirs rather than everyday consumer goods.

It is precisely in this context that digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are seen as a pivotal opportunity to overcome these challenges^[3]. Artificial intelligence possesses powerful capabilities in data perception, pattern recognition, knowledge mining, and generative creation. It can "learn" the movements of artisans through sensors and vision systems, "analyze" the complex relationships among technical parameters via algorithms, "correlate" patterns and their cultural connotations through knowledge graphs, and generate new designs that align with traditional aesthetic paradigms based on big data. This opens up entirely new possibilities for the systematic, multidimensional, and innovative preservation and revitalization of tie-dye craftsmanship.

Table 1 Comparison Between Traditional Inheritance Models and AI-Enabled Models

Comparison Dimension	Traditional Inheritance Model	AI-Enabled Inheritance Model
Knowledge Carrier	Artisan Individual (Tacit Experience)	Digital Systems (Explicit Data and Models)
Mode of Inheritance	Oral Instruction, Mental Guidance, and Long-Term Imitation	Data Recording, Algorithmic Analysis, and Simulated Learning
Production Efficiency	Low, dependent on individual proficiency	High, enabling standardized and flexible production
Quality Control	Fluctuates Significantly, reliant on "Hand Feel"	Stable, capable of millimeter-level precision control
Documentation Form	Static Images, Texts, and Physical Artifacts	Dynamic Multimodal Data (Movements, Temperature, Visual Recordings, etc.)
Source of Innovation	Personal Inspiration and Limited Inheritance	Big Data Analytics, Generative AI, and Cross-Disciplinary Integration

3. Technical Pathways for AI-Enabled Inheritance of Tie-Dye Craftsmanship

The empowerment of tie-dye craftsmanship by artificial intelligence is not the application of a single technology, but rather a technological ecosystem composed of a data layer, an algorithm layer, and an application layer.

At the data layer, the core task is to achieve the "digitization" and "knowledge-based transformation" of the craftsmanship. This serves as the foundation for all upper-layer applications. Specific pathways include:

Multimodal Data Collection: Utilizing high-precision 3D scanning, motion capture, thermal imaging sensors, spectral analyzers, and other equipment to comprehensively collect visual information (patterns, colors, movement trajectories), physical information (force, temperature, humidity, dye concentration),

chemical information (pH levels, compositional changes), as well as textual and audio information (artisan mnemonics, cultural interpretations) during the tie-dye production process.

The inheritance of traditional tie-dye craftsmanship relies on the master-apprentice model of oral instruction and experiential "hand feel," facing structural challenges in the contemporary era. To systematically address this issue, modern technology can provide comprehensive support: first, by constructing a three-tier knowledge graph encompassing "artifact-organization-spirit," scattered techniques can be transformed into a structured, interconnected knowledge network to overcome cultural misinterpretation; second, at the algorithmic level, computer vision enables automatic pattern recognition and style authentication, deep learning analyzes production data to optimize processes and quality control, and generative AI integrates traditional patterns with modern elements to inspire design innovation^[4]; ultimately, these technologies are implemented in specific application scenarios such as intelligent production, creative design, digital archiving, and immersive experiences, driving the contemporary transformation and development of the craftsmanship.

4. Specific Application Scenarios of Artificial Intelligence in Tie-Dye Craftsmanship

4.1 Intelligent Production: From "Experiential Hand Feel" to "Millimeter-Level Precision"

This represents the most mature and effective application area to date. Its core concept is "human-machine collaboration," which entails retaining the crucial manual tying and knotting processes that determine artistic individuality, while delegating highly repetitive, labor-intensive, and precision-demanding dye injection tasks to robots.

Taking the first non-heritage tie-dye intelligent robotic production line in China, developed by Jiangsu Huayi Group, as an example: First, the artisan completes the manual pattern tying and creates a demonstration sample. Subsequently, using a visual recognition system, the robot learns and records the artisan's dye injection path, angle, and dosage. Finally, the robot replicates this process with millimeter-level precision for batch production. This system has increased production efficiency by sixfold, with one robot equivalent to five skilled workers, and maintains a first-pass yield rate consistently above 98%. More importantly, it achieves "flexible style switching"-through rapid reprogramming, the changeover time for producing different styles can be reduced to five minutes, perfectly meeting modern market demands for small batches and multiple production runs.

4.2 Creative Design: From "Pattern Libraries" to "Generative Inspiration"

Artificial intelligence is becoming a "super assistant" for designers. While traditional design relies on limited design teams and pattern libraries, AI empowers creativity in two dimensions:

Pattern Innovation and Derivation: By inputting vast amounts of historical pattern data into generative AI models, AI can learn the compositional principles, color combinations, and cultural semantics of tie-dye designs, thereby generating entirely new creations that are neither simple reproductions nor detached from their cultural roots. Huayi Group has already experimented with having AI-powered robots independently complete the entire T-shirt pattern design process, successfully securing market orders.

Personalized Customization and User Co-creation: In the future, users may be able to input keywords (such as "waves" or "starry sky") or upload their favorite images, and AI can transform these into customized patterns that align with the distinctive characteristics of tie-dye craftsmanship^[5]. This would enable truly "a unique design for each individual," allowing intangible cultural heritage products to become deeply integrated into personal lifestyle expressions. An example of generative AI's output in color or pattern design is shown in Figure 1.

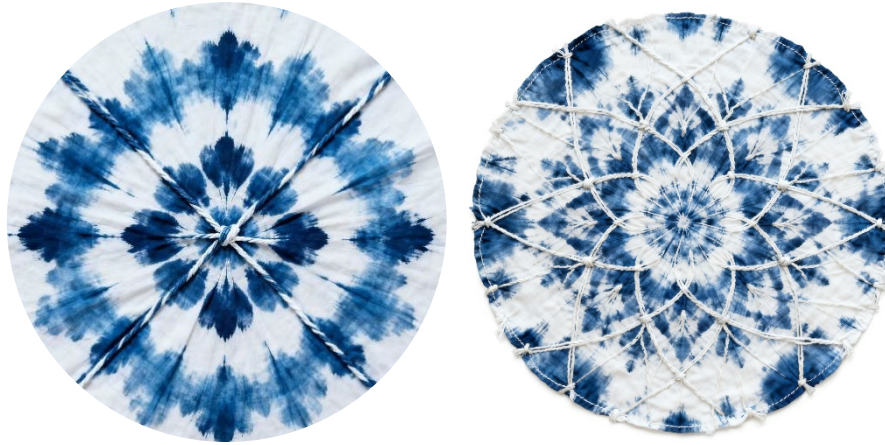


Figure 1 Output Examples of Generative AI in Color or Pattern Design

4.3 Technique Preservation: From "Oral Instruction and Mental Guidance" to "Holographic Digital Archives"

Artificial intelligence makes it possible to construct dynamic, three-dimensional digital archives. The research direction of the Key Laboratory of Traditional Hot-Forming Handcraft Techniques and Digital Design at the China Academy of Art serves as a representative example. For tie-dye, it is possible to:

Establish Digital Replicas of Masters: By conducting long-term, multi-dimensional motion capture and data recording, "digital twin" models of nationally recognized intangible cultural heritage inheritors are constructed to completely preserve their unique techniques, rhythms, and decision-making logic.

Create an Interactive Craftsmanship Knowledge Base: By integrating the collected multimodal data with the constructed knowledge graph, an interactive system that is queryable, decomposable, and simulatable can be formed. Scholars or learners can, much like operating a 3D animation, view and learn the entire process of tying complex patterns frame by frame, while simultaneously accessing their associated cultural meanings.

4.4 Dissemination and Experience: From "Static Display" to "Immersive Interaction"

The combination of Artificial Intelligence and Extended Reality (XR) technology significantly expands the dissemination boundaries and experiential depth of tie-dye^[6].

Augmented Reality (AR) Interactive Experience: Similar to the "Huangyang Qianbian" project in Ningxia, audiences can use smartphones or AR glasses to scan physical objects or images, enabling them to view dynamic demonstrations of tie-dye techniques and three-dimensional animations narrating the stories behind patterns on their screens, thereby achieving a deeper level of understanding.

Virtual Reality (VR) Immersive Workshop: Users can "enter" a virtual tie-dye workshop, perform virtual tying and dyeing operations within the VR environment, experience the different effects resulting from varying degrees of force and techniques, and gain a near-authentic practical experience—all without material waste or spatial constraints. The VR theme theater in Hai'an has successfully integrated local cultural elements into its virtual scenes, providing a successful paradigm for this approach.

Gamification Integration: Incorporating tie-dye craftsmanship as missions or gameplay mechanics into popular games, such as the plan in Justice to create a digital cultural tourism demonstration zone featuring intangible cultural heritage displays, allows young players to naturally encounter and develop an appreciation for traditional culture through entertainment.

Table 2 Multi-Scenario Applications and Effects of AI in the Inheritance of Tie-Dye Craftsmanship

Application Scenario	Core Technologies	Key Functions and Value	Representative Cases/Effects
Intelligent Production	Computer Vision, Industrial Robotics	Boosts efficiency, stabilizes quality, enables flexible production	Huayi Intelligent Production Line: efficiency increased sixfold, first-pass yield rate of 98%
Creative Design	Generative AI (AIGC), Deep Learning	Pattern innovation, personalized customization, lowers design barriers	Huayi AI completed T-shirt pattern design and secured market orders
Technique Preservation	Motion Capture, Multimodal Fusion, Knowledge Graphs	Builds dynamic digital archives, preserves tacit knowledge, supports research and education	Digital ceramic research pathway at the China Academy of Art laboratory
Dissemination and Experience	AR/VR, Gaming Technology	Immersive experiences, interactive education, cross-disciplinary outreach	Ningxia "Huangyang Qianbian" AR experience; Justice game's intangible cultural heritage scene plan

5. Application Effectiveness and Multidimensional Value Analysis

5.1 Industrial Efficiency: Leap in Productivity, Quality, and Environmental Sustainability

The direct value of artificial intelligence is reflected in the modernization transformation of the tie-dye industry. Practical data from Huayi Group shows that intelligent transformation has brought comprehensive benefits: production efficiency increased sixfold, labor usage reduced by 50%, dye utilization rate significantly improved from 60% to 92%, and annual dye waste reduced by approximately 30 tons, earning it the title of "Jiangsu Provincial Green Factory." This not only signifies enhanced corporate profitability and improved market competitiveness but also marks the transformation of traditional craftsmanship towards a green and sustainable intelligent manufacturing model.

5.2 Cultural Value: Precise Preservation and Innovative Expression of Core Techniques

At the cultural level, artificial intelligence plays a dual role as both a "faithful recorder" and an "innovation catalyst." On one hand, through digital means, those unique skills on the verge of being lost with the passing of elderly artisans can be preserved permanently, ensuring the accurate retention of cultural genes^[7]. On the other hand, the generative capabilities of AI break the absolute reliance on individual inspiration for innovation, infusing modern vitality into traditional patterns and enabling them to integrate into contemporary life in new forms. This achieves "creative transformation" and "innovative development." For example, the silk scarf exhibited by Huayi at the cultural fair, which replicates the Sui and Tang dynasty "fish roe resist-dyeing" technique, is precisely a product that combines traditional essence with modern technology.

5.3 Social Benefits: Rebuilding the Succession Pipeline and Deepening Public Awareness

Artificial intelligence has lowered the barrier to learning the craft. Through visualization dashboards and digital teaching systems, previously "ineffable" experiential knowledge is now quantified into specific parameters (for instance, the steamer-loading principle of "light, loose, thin, even, and level" is translated into "240-280 cloth placements"). This significantly shortens the training cycle for new artisans and helps alleviate the crisis of a talent gap. Meanwhile, immersive and gamified experiences have attracted active participation from a large number of young people and the general public. The Huayi Tie-Dye Museum receives over 20,000 experiential visitors annually, with its "Intangible Cultural

Heritage on Campus" program engaging tens of thousands of adolescents. Such widespread involvement nurtures the vitality of intangible cultural heritage inheritance at the societal level, transforming it from a "niche skill" into a genuine "mass culture."

6. Challenges and Future Development Directions

6.1 Core Technical Challenges: Precise Alignment of Data, Algorithms, and Culture

Despite promising prospects, the application of artificial intelligence in the field of intangible cultural heritage is still in its early stages and faces numerous challenges:

Difficulties in Data Collection and Standardization: Intangible cultural heritage crafts possess a high degree of complexity and context-dependency. Designing scientific metadata standards and comprehensively, non-invasively, and with high fidelity capturing data encompassing the "artifact, organization, and spirit" dimensions remains a significant challenge. The quality of the data directly determines the ceiling for all higher-level applications.

Risk of "Distortion" in Cultural Semantics: AI is inherently data-driven. If the training data is incomplete or inaccurately labeled, it can easily lead to cultural misinterpretation. For instance, totemic patterns rich in symbolic meaning from Li brocade might be mistakenly identified as ordinary geometric designs. Ensuring that AI "understands" and "respects" cultural connotations requires the deep involvement of humanities experts throughout the entire process of algorithm design, data annotation, and outcome evaluation.

The Ethical Controversy over the "Aura" of Absence: The "aura" of traditional artworks, as described by Walter Benjamin, stems from their unique manual traces and the imprint of time and space. Do highly standardized, precisely replicated AI products lose this "aura"? Finding a balance between industrialization and artistic uniqueness is a profound ethical and aesthetic issue.

6.2 Future Development Directions: Deep Integration and Ecosystem Building

In the future, the integration of artificial intelligence and tie-dye craftsmanship will advance towards deeper levels: First, it will transition from digitization to "intelligent digital transformation," establishing a smart inheritance system with capabilities for perception, analysis, and optimization—such as adaptive manufacturing systems capable of autonomously adjusting processes. Second, efforts should be made to foster the shift from technological application to collaborative ecosystem building, uniting multiple stakeholders to form a sustainable "research-preservation-innovation" closed loop. Concurrently, there is a need to cultivate a new generation of hybrid "digital artisans" who are well-versed in traditional craftsmanship while also proficient in data and AI tools. Finally, it is essential to establish corresponding ethical guidelines and industry standards to safeguard fair and reasonable data ownership, cultural interpretation, and distribution of innovative outcomes, ensuring the healthy application of technology in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

7. Conclusion and Prospects

Artificial intelligence has brought about a profound paradigm shift to tie-dye craftsmanship, which faces a crisis of inheritance. By enabling digitization, it deciphers the black box of experiential knowledge; through intelligent automation, it enhances industrial efficiency; via creative empowerment, it revitalizes cultural genes; and by facilitating immersive experiences, it broadens dissemination channels. Practice centered on "human-machine collaboration" demonstrates that technology is not the gravedigger of tradition but can become its most powerful sustainer and rejuvenator.

However, it must be clearly recognized that technology is a means, not an end. The ultimate value of artificial intelligence lies in empowering people, enabling ancient cultural wisdom to find new anchors and modes of expression in the digital age. The path forward inevitably requires a tighter handshake between technology and the humanities, a deeper fusion of algorithms and craftsmanship. Only by respecting cultural subjectivity, adhering to the core values of intangible cultural heritage, and applying artificial intelligence both prudently and innovatively can the thousand-year-old flower of tie-dye truly blossom with even more splendid brilliance in the intelligent era.

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