

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CHINA'S GOOD GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF RUILI'S TAI POTTERY

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ABSTRACT

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Yunnan's Tai pottery is one of China's important intangible cultural heritages. Tai pottery has a time-honored history in the region of Tai society worldwide. Noticeably, the Tai potteries and their development have diverse status quo in different Tai societies. However, at present, Tai pottery is encountering the crisis of inheritance in the process of contemporary modernization and globalization. Hence, the protection and development of Tai-pottery intangible cultural heritage (ICH) need the support of good governance. Good governance can coordinate and integrate comprehensive resources from different social sectors. In addition, it can also improve the participation of civil society and empower the vulnerables. However, identifying the distinctions of China's good governance that differ from the Western definition is necessary before the precise analysis of politics and policies. Therefore, based on the qualitative methodology of empirical analysis, this paper adopted the research methods of documentary analysis and case study to analyze the development of Tai-pottery ICH of Ruili from the perspective of China's good governance. Eventually, there is a local political policy analysis of Ruili from the perspective of ICH development at the end of this paper. ICH development, such as Tai pottery in Ruili, needs an organic and dynamic integration with China's good governance and related policies to reach sustainable development.

Keywords: Tai Pottery; China's good governance; intangible cultural heritage; Ruili

1. INTRODUCTION

Tai pottery has a time-honored history, but in the process of modernization and globalization, various utilitarian and social factors are lashing the Tai-pottery ICH development. Thus, the inheritance crisis of Tai pottery has become an objective fact. In development theories, good governance can coordinate and integrate comprehensive resources from different social sectors to facilitate the development of ICH. In addition, good governance can also improve the participation of civil society and empower the vulnerables in this field. As a contribution to this area, this article will discuss the Tai-pottery ICH development from the perspective of China's good governance.

China's good governance differs from that of the Western system, particularly in China's ethnic minority autonomous areas. Hence, the primary definition that should be articulated firstly is what is the Tai-pottery ICH development under China's good governance. Subsequently, the second question that should be answered is how does China's good governance promote the development of Tai-pottery ICH. In order to answer the questions, this article conducts a synthetic analysis of the values and constraints of Tai-pottery ICH development to explore the correlative challenges of China's good governance in the people-oriented and sustainable development of this area. Finally, there is an analysis of the present relevant policies provided by the Ruili government and a critical and dialectical conclusion.

According to the literature review, China's Tai pottery is less-studied in current academia. Those existent research results mainly derive from the areas of history, materialological analysis, and some glancing anthropological analysis.

Firstly, some scholars researched the Tai-pottery from a lens of historical studies. In line with the plentiful Tai *Phongsawadan* and *Tamnan*, pottery possesses meaningful status in the production and life of the Tai people. The Tai-pottery history of Yunnan and Southeast Asia (SEA) began in Neolithic Age. According to *Baiyi Zhuan* (Chinese historical recording of the Ming Dynasty), "The Tais of Yunnan have no utensil like a wooden pail, basin and so forth, only use the earthenware potteries (Jiang, 1980)". The Tai pottery of Ruili has a 3,000-year archeological and anthropological traceability. Nonetheless, the archeological excavation in Ban Chiang of Thailand proves the time-honored history of Tai pottery by approximately 5,000 years (Jangprajuck et al., 2011). However, the historian studies have little concern for the contemporary development of Tai pottery.

Some scholars summarized the factors that caused the reduction of the Tai-pottery industry. With the development of modernization and globalization and the influence of capital markets, traditional society and culture suffered lashings to different degrees. Capitalist consumerism is changing the traditional Tai household. The plastic, glassy, metallic, and high-tech ceramic materials substitute for the indispensability of traditional Tai pottery thereby causing the urgency and crisis of Tai-pottery inheritance (Yu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the representative Chinese scholar, Mrs. Yu, summarized the causes from economic and technological aspects but neglected that the social and political factors also are the crucial ones impacting the development of traditional industries.

In terms of the academic status quo of Tai-pottery studies, the current research is scant wherever in Chinese or international academia and lacks a combination between development theories and real subjects. In light of the literature review therefore the author considers that there is no systematic academic analysis of the (potential) values and constraints of Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development under the perspective of the interdependent-coexist nexus between governance and civil society. However, they are two critical factors that can directly impact the implementation of good governance in ICH development.

2. RUILI'S TAI POTTERY AND CHINA'S GOOD GOVERNANCE

2.1 The status quo of Ruili's Tai pottery development

Ruili is a county-level city of Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture¹ abutting Muse of Myanmar. Ruili, the western part of the Tai cultural circle, alias *Mueang Mao*, is the important portal accessing South Asia (SA) and SEA throughout the historical vicissitude. As for the contemporary plight of Tai pottery in Ruili, only some ornaments of roof ridge and Buddhist ritual vessels, the traditional Tai pottery has not been easy to see on other occasions². Additionally, the compression of social market demand and the plummeted number of handicraftsmen are the reflections of the inheritance crisis of Tai pottery likewise. According to the statistical data, there are merely five over sixty-year-old feminine still insisting on the traditional Tai-pottery making in the entire sphere of Dehong (Du, 2015).

Comparing Tai-pottery patterns between Ruili and Xishuang Banna (Sipsong Panna), Ruili Tai-pottery technology mainly remains a more antique one-in-one pinching into shape method (this ceramic handicraft also exists in the traditional Tai societies of Thai Isan, Laos and the northern part of Vietnam) rather than the

¹ Dehong, also known as *Taue Xoong* (Tai and Kachin Autonomous Prefecture), is the original Tai appellation of Dehong in the Tai Nuea language. It means the lower reaches of the Salween River (Niu, 2016). Ruili is a determinant component of the opening-up bridgehead of Yunnan. There are two category-one ports in Ruili and multitudinous border trade testing areas and developing zones, such as China (Yunnan) Free Trade Testing Area, Ruili National Development and Opening Testing Zone, Jiegao Border Trade Area, etc. The Burma Road, the Sino-Myanmar railway, and the Sino-Myanmar Pipelines enter Myanmar by Ruili port, the largest Sino-Myanmar border trade port. Due to the advantages of border trade, Ruili's jadeite and mahogany furniture industries occupy ascendancy in the Chinese market. (REZ, 2021)

² The information originated from an online interview with the Tai-Pottery ICH inheritors on January 22, 2021.

slow potter's wheel or fast wheel method that prevails in Xishuang Banna and other foreign Tai regions. At present, macroscopically, the Ruili local government, relative cultural sectors, and the civil public are endeavoring to develop indigenous Tai pottery primarily through the three aspects: 1) The replication of the *Xishuang Banna mode* (for example, since 2014, Ruili Culture Center initiated to engage Xishuang Banna's folk handicraftsmen and ICH inheritors to teach the technology of the slow wheel method to the villagers in Yinjing Village (Ruili Financial Media Center, 2020)); 2) Launching Tai-pottery handicraft cultivation for landless feminine and reemployment; and The coordinated development between rural and urban areas³.

2.2 Chinese Good Governance in the Dimension of the Development of ICH

The definitions of good governance are different between China and the West, especially in China's ethnic minority autonomous areas (hereinafter referred to as CEMAA). Yilong Yan (2020) epitomized good governance corresponding to the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics and Marxism. The essence of good governance is for achieving the subjectivity of people (including civil society) to the maximum, fully assuring decision-making participatory of people, and amply developing people's initiative, enthusiasm, and creativeness. The four elements, namely vanguard party⁴, effective government, mutual-beneficial market, and organic society, collectively ensure the people's subjectivity. Among them, the leadership of the vanguard party is the crux and fundamental factor for realizing China's good governance due to it determines that China's government is effective and well-functioned rather than limited government; the market is people-centered instead of capital-oriented; and that the society is an organic whole rather than an incompact social structure. Furthermore, attributing to the Chinese national condition, the coexistence of the pluralistic mode dominated by the bureaucracy-oriented system ought to be a feature of China's good governance (Li et al., 2012).

Contemporary Chinese scholars of development studies dialectically pondered the good governance in CEMAA further. As for the good governance in CEMAA, the economic, societal, and human development sequence is unsuitable for the areas. The societal development gap should be reduced first, and strain to shrink the economic gap, and finally narrow the human development gap. This should be the good governance embodiment in CEMAA. Chinese scholars and politicians addressed this development approach as "leapfrog development." Due to social capital development in CEMAA being scant, the assurance of ethnic character and the combination of "leapfrog" and sustainable development is the precondition for forming good governance in CEMAA (Wen and Hu, 2003). Because only civil society ubiquitously has the public spirit comprised of solidarity, cooperativeness, and trust (community of ethnic unity) as well as possesses positive consciousness of subjective, right, national character and participatory (empowerment and participatory development of minority). Then the CEMAA civil society can be the general mainstay of good governance (effectively performing the rights of autonomy)⁵ for participating in public management (Li and Yang, 2000).

Practicing the concept of good governance in developing ICH, the Chinese macroscopic developing strategy combines with the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP), Vision 2035 of China and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dynamically and organically (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2019). Social sustainable development is the core of ICH development. The governmental interventions and strategies on ICH development not only focus on protection but also should embark on facilitating the indigenous people's life sustainability, aiming to achieve the synergistic effect by coordinating the indigenous social economy and the resources of ICH (Liu, 2020).

It can be known what is the Tai-pottery ICH development under China's good governance from the theoretical analysis above. Good governance can coordinate and integrate comprehensive resources from different social sectors to facilitate the development of ICH. It can also improve the participation of civil society and empower the vulnerables in this field. In addition, the theories about China's good governance are inspirational for the probe into the Tai-pottery development strategy in Chinese social and political contexts. The vanguard party, effective government, mutual-beneficial market, organic society, and civil society's development in CEMAA are the crucial indicators and development plates. To sum up, the development strategy and guidance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are the effective basis for local government to implement good governance and for civil society to participate. Hence, Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development requires the joint participation of government, civil society, and enterprise in a dual-trajectory of top-down and bottom-up, thereby promoting the integration and complementation of social capital, and also realizing

³ The concept of coordinated development between rural and urban areas means combining the Tai-pottery development as a component of coordination to improve city characteristic quality.

⁴ The vanguard party is the characteristic of China's communist party, mainly referring to its sustainability of self-revolution under the autarchic background and endless global and internal challenges.

⁵ Ethnic autonomous areas in China have the right to exercise their powers of autonomy. The governments of autonomous areas must also assume the obligations and responsibilities of development in autonomous areas that are different from those of ordinary local governments. Therefore, effectively and efficiently performing the rights of autonomy is one of the people-oriented good governance embodiments of local government in CEMAA.

the people-oriented and sustainable Tai-pottery ICH development with local ethnic characteristics under the leadership of the vanguard party.

3. VALUES AND CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS AND THE CHALLENGES OF CHINA'S GOOD GOVERNANCE OF RUILI'S TAI-POTTERY ICH DEVELOPMENT

Based on the context above, the content below synthetically analyzes the values and constraints of contemporary Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development from the aspects of the market, social structure, cultural diffusion, and transformation of labor and industry. Endeavors to explore the correlative challenges of China's good governance in the direction of people-oriented and sustainable for the sake of further discussing the combination between China's good governance and Tai pottery ICH development.

3.1 The values and constraints of Ruili's Tai pottery

In general, the development of Yunnan Tai pottery could be proximately categorized into three levels. Level one is a small workshop in primitive Tai-pottery production status and connects the market economy non-tightly. Level two is a slightly larger family workshop that is performance-based (traditional ceramics performance), but its commercial operation mainly relies on ceramics made with modern technologies. Finally, level three is the enterpriseization that integrates the ethnic culture of Tai (Xiang, 2017).

Firstly, the ICH historical value of Ruili Tai pottery is its one-in-one pinching into shape method that preserves a more archaic historical value of anthropology and archaeology than the slow wheel method. De facto, both the techniques and social organization of production differ significantly between Tai-Lue (Xishuang Banna) and Tai-Mao (Dehong) regions (Lefferts and Cort, 1999). Meanwhile, the Tai-pottery development of Xishuang Banna has reached the level three, emphasizing high-quality ICH developing trajectory with creative transformation and development of innovativeness. On the contrary, Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development majorly stagnates in the levels one and two. Therefore, the replication of the *Xishuang Banna mode* is neither practicable nor leapfrog or sustainable.

The levels one and two mainly encounter the constraints of low product quality and productivity, conflicts between protection and development, the decline of industry, and weak publicity and brand and market awareness so that Ruili Tai pottery ICH development does not form the reciprocal and mutual-spillover relationship with the market economy.

Another value is the reconstruction of the traditional labor division of gender under the orientation of governmental policies and strategies (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2019). In the past, in the Tai-pottery traditional labor division of gender, women were the heirs and bearers or makers of domestic ceramics, and only males could succeed in the ceramic techniques for making the ceramics that were used in religious rituals or monastery decoration. Ruili's activities of Tai-pottery ICH development provide a mechanism for the landless feminine to get traditional handicraft training and reemployment. With the intensification of secularization, and traditional religious authority diminished in the labor division of gender, more and more women have succeeded in making religious-using ceramics. On the other hand, Tai-pottery development contains technicality, regionality, ethnicity, and religiousness. Howbeit, the practitioner group lacks the inheritors who not only know technique and artistry but also have the knowledge of indigenous history and religion, whereby causing the products to forfeit the cultural kernel (Yu et al., 2019).

3.2 The insufficient combination between China's good governance and Ruili's Tai pottery

In summary, there are two core values of Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development, the value of human culture and history and the value of participatory development of women.

From the perspective of China's good governance, the constraints could be generalized as a challenge, the inconsonant and deficient development of the mutual-beneficial market⁶ and organic society (Challenge 1). It led to the outflow of practitioners and the obstacle to cultural cause and cultural industry. Subsequently, the collective influences of the plummeted number of Tai-pottery practitioners and deprivation of social participation are the epitomization of the inheritance crisis, which may be driven by utilitarian factors (the constraints). Nevertheless, perhaps, more importantly, education and perception of modernity (including Sinicization) and consumerism pinched people's spontaneity and initiativeness of Tai-pottery inheritance (Lefferts and Cort, 1999).

⁶ China's socialistic market economy is mutual-beneficial. The characteristics of mutual-beneficial refer to the Chinese market economy being people-oriented rather than capital-oriented, and it emphasizes the maximization of people's well-being rather than the maximization of capital benefits. It contains five equilibriums: the equilibrium of supply and demand, the equilibrium of time, the equilibrium of space, the equilibrium of ecology, and the equilibrium of domestic and external (Yan, 2020).

People are the carriers of ICH. Without the participation of people and society, ICH development will lose vitality. Ruili's contemporary Tai-pottery industry foundation is weak, with neither the establishment of any guild nor a negotiation platform with co-governance. This phenomenon caused difficulties in inter-industry market pricing, information sharing, and resource coordination. Also, it incurred the civil society's incapacity of jointly investing enough funds to centralized production and integrated development. Inasmuch as the civil society has a deficiency of indigenous knowledge and development consciousness, the correlative enterprises and practitioners insufficiently participate in the Tai-pottery publicity. Therefore, presently, the Tai-pottery publicity merely is a sort of government-directed publicity of cultural cause mainly based on the offline platform.

According to the situation above, another stark challenge to China's good governance in Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development ought to be the severe deprivation of institution and mechanism supply, the developing civil society and social organization are incapable of undertaking the massive public service functions that the government transferred out (Challenge 2). For example, Yunnan has 30 more NGOs. However, there is only one NGO in Ruili (Ruili Women and Children Development Center). None of them participated in the Tai-pottery ICH development. (Ngos Management Office of Yunnan Public Security Department, 2021; Ruili Women and Children Development Center, 2021)

Finally, Ruili's "self-management capacity of society" is feeble. Therefore, if the two challenges could not be resolved through the people-oriented and sustainable approach insofar, they would continue to hinder the joint participation of government, civil society, and enterprise in the Tai-pottery ICH development. Moreover, they would keep eroding the value of human culture and history until its disappearance. In the end, in order to present Section 3 clearly, the analysis conclusion and the logic map of this section are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 respectively.

Table 1: The Analysis Conclusion

Values	Constraints	Challenge 1 of good governance	Result: Inheritance crisis	Challenge 2 of good governance
The value of human culture and history (A)	Low product quality and productivity (a)	The inconsonant and deficient development of mutual-beneficial market and organic society	The utilitarian factors (the constraints)	The deprivation of institution and mechanism supply. The developing civil society and social organization are incapable of undertaking the massive public service functions that government transferred out
	The conflicts between protection and development (b)		education	
	The decline of industry (c)		The perception of modernity and Sinicization	
	Weak publicity and brand and market awareness (d)		Consumerism	
The value of participatory development of women (B)	Shortage of high-quality inheritor (e)		Summary	
	Product forfeited cultural kernel (f)		↓	
	Summary		The synchronization of plummeted amount of practitioner and deprivation of social participation.	
	↓ No formation of an interdependent and mutual-spillover relationship with market economy			

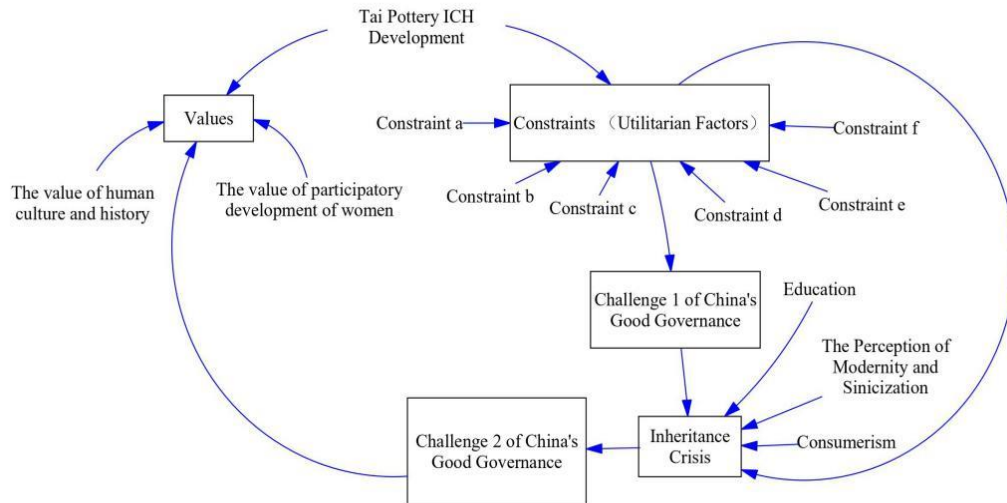


Figure 1: The Logic Map of the Analysis of Section 3

4. THE COMBINATION OF CHINA'S GOOD GOVERNANCE AND RUILI'S TAI POTTERY ICH DEVELOPMENT

Based on the above context, this section devotes itself to the discussion of the people-oriented and sustainable combination of China's good governance and Ruili Tai pottery ICH development in light of China's good governance theories and the local political policies of the Ruili government.

4.1 The practice of China's good governance theories

4.1.1 Mutual-beneficial market and organic society

Firstly, the ICH protection and development need long-term economic investment. The reciprocal and mutual-spillover relationship has not been formed yet between Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development and the market economy, and no formation of a mutual-beneficial relationship between the economic activities of civil society and the Tai-pottery ICH development. In a scenario, the folk capital economy and social organization are insufficient to spur the Tai pottery ICH development. Based on the mutual-beneficial market mechanism, the government, through the macro-control of public resources to reach the time and spatial equilibriums, thereupon then adjusts the conflicts between the short-term economic interests maximum of civil society and the long-term (sustainable) people's well-being that benefits from the ICH protection and development, and stabilizing the equilibrium among correlative working population, industry layout and spatial distribution of resources simultaneously.

Secondly, albeit the current Ruili Tai pottery ICH development achieved by the reconstruction of traditional labor division of gender, the traditional society bonded by ethnic kinship, culture, religion, identity, and ethos was wrecked to some extent. The capital power of the macro milieu also is constantly stratifying the existing and impending Tai-pottery inheritance-related industries and ascribing to the interest rivalry, and the relevant individuals are further atomized. The scholars of Thailand also pointed out that the ethnic characteristic is an indispensable component of the Tai-pottery industry, and the dynamic high-level collaboration should be established among the enterprise network that highly applies the policy into practice (Jangprajuck et al., 2011). Therefore, under the organic society mechanism, the government should act in the role of the organizer. The government should encourage and standardize the development of various types of social organizations, encourage the constitution of the new community of mobile internet, and encourage the development of spontaneously bottom-up publicity activities based on the online and offline platforms. It is to form a Tai-pottery development model that is comprised of information exchange, resources sharing, organic coordination betwixt government and civil society, and also guide Ruili's Tai pottery to achieve the dual-trajectory development of cultural cause and cultural industry with indigenous ethnic characteristics as the cultural kernel. In other words, the Tai-pottery ICH development in the cultural cause should maintain the archaic one-in-one pinching into shape method. On the other hand, the Tai-pottery ICH development in the cultural industry should develop the ceramic technologies to improve product quality, improve the connotation of innovation advancing with epoch, and meet the requirements of the consumer market.

4.1.2 Effective government and the response to people's appeals

The mass line is embedded into the process of government governance, the efficient response to people's demands, service delivery to people, concentrating the decentralized wisdom of civil society collectively composed one of the connotations of the effective government of China's good governance. It makes the government management and people's appeals form an intimate, interactive nexus (Yan, 2020).

Hence, the government should respond to the several appeals in the future in the process of Ruili Tai pottery ICH development:

1) The government should build educational and cultural-exchange platforms for cultivating high-quality Tai-pottery-making personnel with the modern scientific and technological innovation ideas but also have the traditional skills of handicrafts and indigenous knowledge and provide good personnel policies as well.

2) The government and relevant sectors should co-lead the establishment of uniform and flexibly negotiable standards for Tai-pottery industry and co-supervise the production of superior Tai-pottery products adapted to local ethnic characteristics and international quality standards (Muslim et al., 2020). In order to make the qualification of the products empowered to attract domestic and international investment. The government and relevant sectors should guide Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development to integrate into the Sino-SEA socio-cultural cooperation institutions, such as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC).

3) All-level deputies to the National People's Congress should raise valuable subjects to improve the works of legislation for protecting the intellectual property rights, patent rights, and trademarks of Tai-pottery practitioners and enhancing the brand awareness. In addition, special funds, financial subsidies, and honorary prizes should also be set up to stimulate practitioners' initiative, enthusiasm, and creativeness effectively.

4.2 The local political policies of Ruili government

In accordance with the Development Plan of Yunnan Ruili-Daying Rivers Basin (2022–2035) (The Government of Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, 2020), Ruili local government promulgated four special projects (policies) that offer opportunities and platforms to Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development.

4.2.1 The construction project of Vigor Ruili-Daying Rivers

Based on the macro development strategies of the regionalism of BRI and raising the level of opening up, the Ruili government betake itself to improve the frontier trade environment for trans-border populations. Ruili Tai-pottery market should actively integrate with the frontier trade policies with Myanmar (border cities) to organically implemented the geographical and ethnic cultural advantages of the One County One Specialty policy of Dehong. Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development should positively participate in the Sino-Myanmar cultural exchange platforms, both bottom-up and top-down, such as the Cultural Exchange Center of Jiegao Port and CHINA-SOUTH ASIA EXP in Kunming, in order to attract domestic and international attention and investments.

4.2.2 The construction project of cultural tourism

Based on the cultural tourism industry modernization strategy, the Ruili government makes cultural tourism an organic community of cultural development. Therefore, Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development needs to apply the policies of the tourism destination upgrade project and integrate Tai pottery ICH development into the Tai historical town tourism development and the construction of Dehong Tai cultural tourism.

4.2.3 The construction project of beautiful countryside

Based on the rural revitalization strategy combined with poverty alleviation, the Ruili government promotes the policies of rural industry construction and coordinates the urban and rural social capitals. To make more rural units have opportunities and material conditions to establish the participatory relation with Tai-pottery ICH development. Meanwhile, this strategy also directly provides policies for protecting ICH, historic villages, and traditional ethnic tribes.

4.2.4 The project of public service

Based on the strategy of improving the quality of public cultural service, the Ruili government promotes a comprehensive public cultural service policy, which integrates various cultural resources dynamically and organically, such as establishing the Ethnic Minority Traditional Culture Source Basement. Therefore, it is a practical and effective policy for Tai-pottery practitioners and their products to enhance cultural kernel.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the analysis of the article, Ruili's political policies do not fully respond to the appeals of Ruili's Tai-pottery ICH development to some extent. Nevertheless, the government has provided some relevant policies and platforms to gradually resolve the constraints and reach the sustainable development model of the local ethnic-cultural industry under the government's leadership to ensure people's subjectivity and the spontaneous participation of civil society. It tallies with China's good governance principles of the mutual-beneficial market, organic society, and effective government.

The author considers that China's good governance is facilitating the contemporary Ruili Tai-pottery ICH development toward the developing model of the quinary sector of industry (Dutton, 2009). Namely, the mutual-beneficial and organic development is jointly comprised of Tai-pottery manufacture, cultural service (Tai ceramics performance), and cultural added value service to other industries (Tai cultural Tourism). However, despite that, the status quo (levels 1 and 2) of the Ruili Tai-pottery cultural industry is still unable to extricate itself from the dilemma of low productivity of cultural products. Therefore, the government with the vanguard party should give more consideration to this factor in the future policy practice for civil society and earnestly implement the dual-trajectory development that maintains and continues the Tai-pottery cultural caused by the achievement of the economic development of the cultural industry.

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