



A Study on the Practical Approaches of Grassroots Organizations in Protecting and Using Red Cultural Resources

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Abstract: Red cultural resources are an important spiritual asset and economic support for rural revitalization. Rural grassroots organizations, as the core entities for protecting and utilizing these resources, directly affect how their value is transformed. To address challenges like fragmented protection, single-use, and insufficient industrial integration of red cultural resources in plain areas, this study takes the old site of North China United University in Xincheng Town, Xinji City as a case. Based on theories of rural governance, cultural heritage protection, and collaborative governance, it systematically reviews the current practices of grassroots organizations in site protection, resource integration, and industrial fusion, and analyzes the practical difficulties they face, such as poor coordination, lack of funds and technology, weak talent support, shallow industrial integration, and absence of institutional guarantees. The research shows that grassroots organizations need to build cross-village collaborative governance systems, expand diverse funding channels, deepen the integration of 'red culture + agriculture + intangible cultural heritage' industries, optimize talent introduction and training mechanisms, and establish long-term guarantee systems, forming a 'five-in-one' practical path: organization empowerment — resource integration — industrial fusion — talent cultivation — institutional assurance. This path can achieve sustainable protection and efficient use of red cultural resources, providing a replicable practical reference for empowering rural revitalization through red resources in plain areas.

Keywords: Red cultural resources; protection and use; grassroots rural organizations; rural revitalization.

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1. Introduction

Red cultural resources are the sum of the invaluable spiritual wealth and material carriers formed by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China during the processes of revolution, construction, and reform. In the vast plains, there are numerous red cultural heritage sites such as former residences, ancestral homes, and cultural relics. These sites record the local revolutionary history, serve as important foundations for inheriting red genes and continuing the spiritual lineage, and are unique resources for promoting comprehensive rural revitalization, especially cultural revitalization, in the new era. The 'Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform and Promoting Chinese-Style Modernization' adopted by the 20th National Congress and the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee emphasizes the need to 'make good use of red resources,' deepen education on patriotism, collectivism, and socialism, and focus on cultivating and practicing the core values of socialism. This provides a political direction and fundamental guidance for the protection and utilization of red cultural resources in the new era^[1].

Xincheng Town in Xinji City, Hebei Province, as the original site of the ancient city of Shulu County, was an important place of education for North China United University (hereinafter referred to as 'North China United University') during the Liberation War. The North China United University site complexes, now located in 11 administrative villages including Jializhuang, Dalizhuang, and Lugou Village, are typical dispersed red cultural heritage in plain areas. This study selects this case to deeply analyze the specific practices of rural grassroots organizations in the protection and utilization of red resources, the deep-seated contradictions they face, and further extract a practical path model with promotional value, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical lessons for similar regions.

2. Literature Review

Over the past twenty years, domestic experts and scholars have conducted extensive academic research on the protection and utilization of red culture and its resources. In 2012, the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party proposed cultivating and practicing the core socialist values, which further promoted the study of red cultural resources. From 2015 to the present, this research has entered a phase of rapid growth, and by 2021, it had become a prominent topic in academic circles.

2.1 Research on the Concept and Connotation of Red Culture Resources

Regarding the concept of red culture resources, Cui (2023) and Zhou (2023) believe that red culture is an outstanding culture formed in the historical forging of the Chinese nation. Red culture resources are the carriers of red culture, which are diverse in form and rich in content, including material forms such as red sites, buildings, historical relics, and literary and artistic works that bear significant historical events, as well as the intangible spiritual forms they contain, such as the Red Boat Spirit, the Jinggangshan Spirit, and the Long March Spirit^[2]. Huang (2025) believes that red culture also includes institutional culture, which refers to the theoretical works, programs, and policies formed during the revolutionary period^[3].

Regarding the study of the connotation of red cultural resources, scholars have conducted multifaceted discussions and formed different viewpoints. Qu and Wen (2019) proposed that red cultural resources are a compound noun composed of "red," "culture," and "resources," and should not be regarded as a single concept. It should also include related concepts such as "red resources" and "red culture," and they emphasize its prominent "resource nature"^[4]. Zhang (2017) believes that red cultural resources are the cultural resources accumulated by the Chinese Communist Party leading the Chinese people in the process of striving for national liberation, national prosperity, and people's happiness^[5]. Zhang (2022) pointed out that red cultural resources are the cultural resources in which material, spiritual, institutional, and behavioral forms coexist, scientifically preserved by the Communist Party of China while leading the Chinese nation through arduous struggles^[6]. Wu (2024) believes that red cultural resources are a type of cultural form whose essential connotation is marked by redness. They generally refer to the unique cultural forms created by the Chinese Communist Party leading the Chinese people in the long historical process of revolution, construction, and reform, taking material, institutional, and spiritual carriers, and having Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese manner^[7].

Since red culture is a unique cultural heritage of China, primarily closely related to China's revolutionary history and socialist development, foreign scholars have relatively limited direct attention and research on 'red culture.' However, there are Western journalists represented by Edgar Snow who conducted field investigations and documented the historical facts of this cultural form during the revolutionary period, writing stirring red classics. For example, works such as 'Red Star Over China,' 'China's Future,' and 'Tomorrow's China' publicized China's red revolution to the world based on what they saw and heard, significantly changing international prejudices about the 'red zones' at that time. In another sense, this also represents the

real manifestation of the dissemination and promotion of China's red culture. Gursoy Dogan (2016), in 'Support for Red Tourism Among Chinese People Based on the Authority of the Central Government,' mentioned that red tourism is more inclined to political behavior, enhancing trust and support for the central government among the people by strengthening red tourism and boosting cultural confidence^[8]. Liu (2020) refers to tourism themes such as historical relics, historical sites, and former residences of famous historical figures as cultural tourism, as the cultural connotations they contain allow tourists to experience cultural elements during the tourism process^[9].

2.2 Research on the Utilization of Red Cultural Resources

Regarding the problems in the utilization of red cultural resources, Chen(2022), combining different analytical methods such as the new public management theory and stakeholder theory, focused on analyzing the current situation of local resource development in red cultural tourism^[10]. The main issues are unreasonable development planning, insufficient resource development efforts, inadequate publicity influence, and insufficient integration of various resources. The study clarified five reasons: the government has not formed a comprehensive development plan, has not established an advanced development concept, has not developed innovative publicity awareness, has not integrated market-oriented operation consciousness, and has not achieved a high level of fiscal revenue. Feng (2022) believes that the effective performance of government functions is an important guarantee for red resources to generate comprehensive benefits^[11]. The reason why the utilization of red resources in Heilongjiang faces problems such as resource damage, the need to improve value guidance, and slow development of red industries, is mainly due to not tapping into the deep value of red resources, fragmented use not producing overall effects, and outdated, uninnovative development models. Wang (2022) applied the theory and concept of collaborative governance to study the protection and utilization of red cultural heritage sites^[12]. She pointed out the problems and difficulties in the protection and utilization of red cultural heritage sites, mainly including an imperfect collaborative governance system, unclear goal positioning, unclear division of government powers and responsibilities, an incomplete "core-multilateral" governance mechanism, insufficient participation of social forces, low enthusiasm for participation in collaborative governance, a lack of collaborative governance safeguarding mechanisms, and a relative scarcity of effective governance measures. The causes of these problems include that the concept of collaborative governance has not been firmly established, the importance of collaborative governance is not fully recognized, the rules and systems of collaborative governance are not sound, there is a lack of collaborative

linkage mechanisms, social governance entities are weak, the awareness of social responsibility is inadequate, there is a lack of mechanisms to stimulate active participation of multiple entities in governance, and the creation of a pattern of joint construction, joint governance, and shared benefits is still in progress.

Due to differences and influences from multiple aspects such as ideology, there is currently relatively little research abroad on the improvement of the utilization and management of China's red culture resources from the perspective of public administration. Most studies are still concentrated on Chinese history, the history of the Communist Party of China, and the current international cultural and ideological competition. Popova O. L (2020) believes that there is still a lack of incentivizing policies in guidance and support, the government's overall macro-control function is not fully utilized, and the main reasons for these issues include inaccurate positioning of government duties leading to functional overreach, and unsmooth government management mechanisms^[13]. Marcak I. K (2020) believes that most of the current funding mainly comes from fiscal funds and corporate investment. A lack of development funds or insufficient continuity of government fiscal investment can lead to problems such as incomplete resource development and inadequate resource protection^[14]. Regarding strategies for optimizing government functions in the management and utilization of cultural resources. Atun R. A (2019) believes that in the process of diversified expansion, the government needs to play its role and strengthen policy efforts to promote it, among which policy implementation is also key to achieving it^[15].

3 Analysis of Theoretical Applicability

3.1 Theoretical Foundation

The theory of collaborative governance emerged at the beginning of the 21st century, and its core lies in responding to 'complex public problems that cannot be addressed by a single organization'^[16]. Classical definitions point out that collaborative governance is a process in which multiple stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, and civil society jointly participate in public decision-making and management in a formal, consultative manner. The model developed by Ansell and Gash further operationalizes this idea, emphasizing a cyclical process composed of key variables such as 'starting conditions, institutional design, leadership, collaborative processes, and outcomes,' providing a clear pathway for empirical research. The premise of this theory is that when public issues (such as the protection of red resources) are cross-domain, resource-dependent, and have multiple objectives, traditional bureaucratic or market mechanisms may fail, necessitating effective governance through the continuous interaction, trust-building, and co-creation of rules among diverse

actors. This theoretical perspective goes beyond the single narrative of 'government-led' or 'community self-governance,' placing the analytical focus on the dynamic network of relationships among multiple actors and the process of governance structure formation, providing a powerful conceptual tool for understanding the hub role of grassroots organizations in new town practices and the collaborative challenges they face.

3.2 Analysis of Theoretical Applicability

Applying the theory of collaborative governance to the specific context of decentralized red resources protection in plains areas has profound internal logic and a high degree of practical relevance.

First, the complexity of the governance object calls for collaboration. The former sites of the North China United University in the new towns have typical characteristics such as 'scattered distribution, diverse ownership (involving collective village property and private property of farmers), multiple values (historical, educational, economic), and varying risks of damage.' This complexity means that no single entity—whether grassroots government, village 'two committees,' property owners, or cultural tourism enterprises—can independently achieve systematic protection and sustainable use. This fully aligns with the problematic features targeted by collaborative governance theory, namely, problems that are vaguely defined, solutions that are uncertain, and numerous stakeholders.

Second, the fragmented governance structure urgently needs integration. Research results show that the management of red resources in the new towns involves multiple 'line' departments at the county (city) level, including cultural tourism, cultural relics, publicity, and agriculture and rural affairs, as well as 'block' forces such as township governments, the 'two committees' of 21 administrative villages, villagers, and potential market entities. This 'line-block division' is precisely the core dilemma that collaborative governance aims to solve. If the new towns are to integrate site resources scattered across 11 villages, it will inevitably require the establishment of some sort of institutionalized collaborative platform and mechanism that transcends the boundaries of individual administrative villages, which coincides with the 'institutional design' and 'collaborative process' emphasized by collaborative governance theory.

Finally, the diversification of governance goals requires balance. The protection and utilization of red resources involve multiple and potentially conflicting objectives, such as 'protection first, cultural heritage, economic development, and community benefits.' Collaborative governance theory does not presuppose a single priority but focuses on how to reach consensus among multiple actors through negotiation, forming a 'win-win' plan that takes all parties into account.

4. Current Status of Red Cultural Resources in New Towns

The new town is centered around the protection and utilization of the former site of North China United University, primarily focusing on Jiali Village. In 2020, the 'North China United University Shulu Museum' was completed, serving as the main venue for exhibitions, data preservation, and cultural dissemination. The former residences of Wang Kun and Zhou Weizhi were converted into the 'North China United University Art Troupe Shulu Exhibition Hall' and a data room, which well preserve the couple's living scenes at the time and also have small-scale exhibition and reception functions. The former residence of He Jingzhi was converted into the 'North China United University Art Troupe Shulu Branch Museum,' mainly responsible for introducing and displaying information about relevant figures and background. The former site of the academy was transformed into the 'North China United University Academy of Arts Shulu Site,' where only the main gate and outer walls were repaired, and the inner courtyard is overgrown with weeds. Other villages have a weak awareness of protecting and rescuing related sites, and with the passing of those who experienced it firsthand, it has become very difficult to investigate the relevant history.

4.1 Overall Distribution of the Campus Locations of North China United University

The remains of the old site are distributed across 11 villages. Among them, Dali Village served as the headquarters of the school, including the former residences of Cheng Fangwu, Director Lin, and Pharmacy Director Zhao Bin, among others; Jiali Village housed the College of Arts and the Art Troupe, including the former residences of Wang Kun and Zhou Weizhi, He Jingzhi, the former site of the College of Arts, Shu Qiang, the former residences of Li Huanzi and Li Yuanqing, and former residences of three people including Xu Guangyao; Luguo Village was the site of the Foreign Languages College, with related resources such as the Maximo Cemetery; Haojia Village was the location of former residences of students from the Department of Fine Arts of the College of Arts; Qianduku Village was the site of the Law and Political Science College, with three surviving former residences of teachers and students. In addition, Dongjiatun (Pingju Research Institute), Shenjiazhuang (College of Arts), Quantou Village (Foreign Languages College), and Changjiatun (College of Education) also retain relevant historical traces.

Overall, the old site is small in scale and scattered. Jiali Village has relatively systematic and complete protection of the Huabei United University former site, but there are few specialized cultural facilities, and it lacks corresponding visitor service centers, guide signs, parking lots, and other

supporting facilities, which affects the cultural tourism experience.

4.2 Condition of Preservation and Renovation of the Old Site

The preservation conditions of related historical sites and relics vary greatly. Some have been carefully protected due to the spontaneous efforts of local villagers and other reasons, and there are still many historical materials available for reference; others have leaking roofs, broken doors, and chaotic courtyards; while some have become residential land, or have been demolished, or are so severely damaged that they are difficult to restore.

Protection and restoration are mainly carried out by the government and individuals, with some also being spontaneously protected by the public. For government and individual renovations, the old sites are repaired at the expense of homeowners or the government (such as the former residences of Wang Kun and Zhou Weizhi, and the main gate of the former North China United University Arts College), and protective fences have been set up at Marksmov's grave. Spontaneous protection by the public is represented by the former residence of He Jingzhi, where the landlord's descendants follow instructions to maintain the original appearance of the house over a long period, reflecting the public's regard for red history. Overall, the efforts for protection are uneven, most old sites lack regular maintenance funds and professional plans; the forms of utilization are singular, and a complete chain of 'protection – display – experience' has not yet been formed, resulting in a low degree of cultural tourism integration.

5 The practical difficulties faced by grassroots organizations in leading the protection and utilization of red cultural resources

5.1 Insufficient overall coordination ability, difficulties in resource integration

The former site of North China United University is scattered across 11 administrative villages, including Jializhuang, Dalizhuang, and Luguo Village. This physical dispersion naturally increases the difficulty of coordination. In practice, party branches in each village often operate independently, focusing their work on individual heritage sites within their own village. For example, Jializhuang Village has focused on building the "North China United University History Museum in Shulu," while the former sites in other villages remain largely scattered. Due to the lack of a strong town-level coordination mechanism and a unified protection plan covering the entire area, historical relics such as the east and west city gates of the ancient Shulu City preserved in Dongjie and Xijie Villages have not established effective cultural narratives or spatial linkage

with the core red resources. This 'piecemeal island' management model prevents the valuable cultural and red heritage resources of the ancient city from being connected spatially and complemented in content, seriously weakening the overall attractiveness and scale effect of the resources and limiting the shaping of the region's red culture brand.

Theoretically, party branch-led cooperatives are key organizational innovations for integrating scattered resources, connecting to the market, and developing industries. However, research shows that cooperatives in multiple villages of the new town have not played their expected role. For example, cooperatives in places like Shenjiazhuang and Haojiazhuang Villages are basically in a state of 'idling' or merely registered without operation, failing to participate substantially in critical aspects related to red cultural tourism. On one hand, the cooperatives are limited in promoting large-scale land transfer and consolidation, as villagers continue to manage land separately on a household basis, making it difficult to implement cultural tourism supporting projects that require a certain scale, such as parking lots, visitor service centers, and experiential farms. On the other hand, the cooperatives have also failed to become industrial platforms connecting red educational tourism with local specialty agriculture, such as Crown Pears and densely planted pears, and cannot design and operate integrated products of 'red education and farming experience,' resulting in a single channel for converting the economic value of red resources and weak contribution to increasing villagers' income and supporting the collective economy.

5.2 Lack of financial and technical resources, limited level of protection

The funding for the protection of the former site of the North China United University in Xincheng Town relies heavily on two channels: first, the meager collective economic income of each village, and second, subsidies from higher-level projects. Survey data show that the sources of village collective economic income are highly singular, mainly relying on land lease rents. For example, the collective annual income of Dali Village is about a hundred thousand yuan, and this income has to cover multiple public affairs within the village. After prioritizing the maintenance of infrastructure and basic public services, the funds specifically available for cultural relic repairs are very limited. For repairs like the former residence of Cheng Fangwu, which require systematic roof reinforcement, wall restoration, and damp-proof treatment, the financial demand is far beyond what the village collective can independently bear. For more villages without special industries or resource income, the party branch has not even set up a dedicated protection fund, which results in many sites assessed as 'in need of repair,' such as the former residence

of art department students in Haojia Village (with leaking roofs and broken main gates), being caught in a vicious cycle of 'small problems turning into major damage' year after year, leaving protection work in a passive situation of 'no money to act.'

Protecting revolutionary sites not only requires funding but also scientific methods and professional expertise. Currently, village-level organizations have significant shortcomings in this regard. On one hand, repair projects lack professional guidance and standards. Due to the absence of professional teams qualified in cultural heritage protection, many repair works are limited to self-organized maintenance by villagers or the hiring of ordinary construction workers. On the other hand, lack of funds makes it impossible for grassroots organizations to hire professional institutions, and the lack of professional skills may lead to the inefficient or even incorrect use of limited funds, failing to achieve the expected protection effect. As for modern heritage protection techniques such as digital recording, three-dimensional modeling, and preventive monitoring, village-level organizations lack both awareness and the ability to introduce them. This has resulted in seriously damaged sites that are difficult to repair physically (such as the already collapsed former residence of Xu Guangyao and two others in Jializhuang Village) failing to preserve historical spatial information and architectural details through digital means, facing the irreversible risk of 'complete loss of historical information.'

5.3 Industrial integration is not deep, and the forms of utilization are single.

In terms of resource activation methods, current utilization basically remains at the elementary stage of static exhibitions. Although Jializhuang Village has built the 'North China United University Shulu Historical Museum' and related thematic exhibition halls, most heritage sites only have simple introduction panels. This one-dimensional visiting mode fails to fully explore and present the vivid historical scenes and touching stories of 'hard work and dedication to education' of the teachers and students of North China United University. There is a lack of in-depth study courses, role-playing scripts, or immersive scenario performances developed in conjunction with the site environment, as well as interactive experience projects using modern audiovisual and digital technologies (such as VR/AR) to restore historical scenes. As a result, visitors, especially young people, find it difficult to resonate deeply and form emotional connections, resulting in short stays and low willingness to spend. Meanwhile, the development of 'secondary consumption' products centered on red culture is almost non-existent. Items based on university figures, emblems, or historical events, such as cultural and creative souvenirs, books, or audiovisual products, have not appeared, leaving the industrial chain extremely short and

the cultural and economic added value of products unexploited.

The degree of industrial integration is low, and the linkage of elements is weak, failing to create a synergistic amplification effect. This is a structural shortcoming restricting the development of red resources in new towns. Red cultural resources have not yet established substantial business and product connections with locally advantaged agricultural resources and municipal-level intangible cultural heritage (such as peach wood sword carving in Bailongqiu Village, handmade smoked vinegar in Quantou Village, and gourd pyrography in Beijie Village). These highly marketable, composite, and experiential tourism products remain at the conceptual stage, failing to be transformed into specific itineraries and service projects. As a result, each advantageous resource operates independently, unable to form a '1+1>2' brand synergy.

5.4 Weak talent support, aging team structure

Human resources are the core driving force for the creative transformation and innovative development of red cultural resources. New towns face a dual challenge in this area. On one hand, the continuous outflow and aging of local talent leads to a weakening of the endogenous development entities. On the other hand, the existing training system is severely disconnected from the needs of industrial development, resulting in potential human capital that cannot be effectively transformed. Together, these factors constitute a prominent shortcoming in the development of the red industry under the rural revitalization strategy.

Industrial development lacks support from professional talent. The local labor market is unable to provide the professionals required for the development of red cultural tourism, such as cultural relic preservation, scenic area planning, event planning, brand marketing, and digital operations. Even with good development ideas, they are often stalled due to a lack of personnel to execute them, causing the industry to remain at a traditional and rudimentary stage. At the same time, the phenomenon of labor outflow in new towns is significant, with the proportion of young and middle-aged workers leaving for outside jobs generally as high as 70%–80%. A large portion of the remaining population is older, with comparatively insufficient motivation and ability to learn new knowledge and skills, resulting in low participation rates. As a result, villagers, as the most important potential participants, do not have their human capital effectively enhanced, and their feasible capacity to participate in red cultural tourism development is severely restricted, making the social foundation for industrial development weak. Among many village committee members, there is a lack of compound core talent who both deeply understand the connotations of

red culture from North China United University and are knowledgeable about modern cultural tourism industry operations and market promotion, which creates significant obstacles for grassroots promotion and execution of red cultural resources.

5.5 Lack of institutional safeguards, long-term mechanisms have not been established

The widespread lack of specialized planning and standardized regulations has led to protection and utilization activities lacking scientific guidance and institutional constraints. Currently, neither the new towns nor the villages under their jurisdiction have formulated a legally binding “Special Plan for the Protection and Utilization of Red Cultural Resources.” At the town level, there is no systematic blueprint that goes beyond the boundaries of administrative villages to coordinate the protection levels of 11 heritage sites, the sequence of renovations, functional zoning, and tourism routes. At the village level, the management of heritage sites by each village party branch mostly relies on individual initiative and temporary decisions. For example, for old sites classified as “needing renovation,” there is no clear procedure or standard regarding whether to conduct simple maintenance or apply for professional restoration. This directly leads to fragmented protection work and low-level repetition, such as the decision at the former site of the Academy of Arts to only renovate the gate while leaving the inner courtyard in decay, which is a typical result of the absence of planning and management standards. In contrast, well-established red tourism sites treat specialized planning as the “constitution” of their activities, ensuring scientific and consistent work.

Red heritage sites have complex property rights, belonging to village collectives or individual households, but their cultural value is public in nature. At present, there is a lack of a clear system to define each party’s rights, responsibilities, and methods of profit sharing. For example, when external capital intends to invest in developing the Jiali Village area, there are no rules for how to price the use rights of heritage buildings for equity participation, how supporting surrounding land should be transferred, or how profits should be distributed among the village collective, households, and investors. This deters potential social capital and makes villagers adopt a wait-and-see attitude toward participating in protection and utilization because they cannot institutionally anticipate whether or how they will benefit.

In the existing rural governance assessment system, the protection and utilization of red resources has not yet become a binding indicator or important source of incentive for town and village-level organizations. The effectiveness of this work is weakly linked to the promotion, rewards, or penalties of cadres, which partly explains why some villages

have invested insufficiently in this long-term task. At the same time, for cases of ongoing damage to heritage sites due to inadequate management, there is no clear accountability subject or procedure. The lack of institutional incentives makes related work easily crowded out by other more urgent “central tasks,” making it difficult to maintain consistent momentum.

6 Optimal Path for Grassroots Organizations to Lead the Protection and Utilization of Red Culture Resources

6.1 Enhance organizational capability and establish a collaborative governance framework

The utilization of red culture resources cannot rely solely on the government’s individual efforts; it should also firmly establish the concept of collaborative governance, follow certain rules and systems, widely mobilize public participation, and promote governance through coordinated interaction among diverse entities. This approach aims to enhance the sense of responsibility among multiple stakeholders, including the government, social organizations, market players, and the public, forming overall governance effectiveness and synergy. By extensively soliciting public opinions and suggestions on the use of red culture resources, as well as holding forums with public representatives, the participation of the public in the government’s public management process of red culture resources can be increased^[17].

First, establish a tiered, coordinated governance framework to achieve a shift from “fragmented” to “integrated.” Under the overall leadership of the town party committee, immediately set up a tangible “Special Working Group for the Protection and Utilization of the Old Site of North China United University in the New Town.” Members of the working group should include not only the town’s deputy leaders and heads of relevant departments but also must incorporate the party branch secretaries of core heritage villages such as Jiali Village, Dali Village, and Luguo Village as permanent members. The primary responsibility of the working group is to, following the cultural relic protection principle of “repair as old, minimal intervention,” hire professional institutions to formulate a scientific and unified overall protection plan and phased restoration plan for the scattered old sites in each village, fundamentally changing the uneven protection standards and varying progress across villages. At the same time, within each village party branch, a “Red Resource Protection Officer” position should be clearly established, which can be concurrently held by a responsible village cadre or party member, specifically tasked with regular inspections, basic cleaning, hazard warnings, and direct reporting for old sites within the village, ensuring that each resource has a clearly

assigned person, thereby forming a three-level responsibility loop of “town party committee overall decision-making—special working group (core village participation) planning coordination—village party branch (officer) local implementation.”

Second, improve the regularized collaborative mechanism to ensure orderly participation of multiple stakeholders. Institutionalized communication is the foundation of collaboration. A “New Town Red Cultural Tourism Development Joint Meeting” system should be established, convened regularly by the town party committee or the special working group, with all relevant village party branch secretaries, cooperative leaders, village representatives, and invited experts and investors participating. The meetings need to focus on practical issues such as specific problems in site restoration, cross-village integration of study-tour routes, and profit distribution plans for democratic consultation and collective decision-making. At the same time, each village should incorporate red resource protection into the “Village Regulations and Covenants,” which, in a locally recognized statutory form, clearly defines villagers’ responsibilities for cleaning, guarding, and maintaining sites in front of and behind their houses, and also grants them priority participation in cultural tourism services and the right to enjoy collective dividends. This transforms top-down protection requirements into bottom-up conscious actions and community recognition.

6.2 Broaden funding channels and improve protection technology levels

The utilization of red cultural resources cannot rely solely on the power of the government. The government is also incapable of fully handling all aspects of red cultural resource utilization. The Xinji Municipal Government should broaden channels for capital investment, leverage the functions of government, seek support from higher-level policy funds, implement local fiscal funds, and mobilize private and social funds to focus on expanding public investment in red cultural resource utilization and strive to solve the funding difficulties in this area.

First, seek support from higher-level policy funds. Carefully study higher-level policies regarding support for red cultural resource utilization and the protection of historical sites and cultural relics, and plan and package projects in a targeted manner to obtain more public policy fund support from superior departments. Take the site group of the North China United University in the New District as a whole regional red cultural heritage, and collectively apply for provincial and higher-level special funds for cultural relic protection, transfer payments for old revolutionary areas, and funds for the integration of culture and tourism.

Second, implement local fiscal fund guarantees. Improve relevant policies for public financial support for red

cultural resource utilization, set up special funds for red cultural resource utilization in the annual government budget, and gradually increase guiding funds for the development of the red cultural resource industry each year by a certain proportion. Establish a government red cultural resource utilization development fund, and strengthen funding guarantees for red cultural resource utilization through financing and loans via government-owned enterprise platforms or issuing special bonds for red cultural resource utilization.

Third, increase efforts in social investment and financing. Systematically organize and actively connect with the North China United University Alumni Association and related research institutions, set up targeted restoration funds, and seek named repair donations for specific sites (such as Cheng Fangwu's former residence). When conditions are ripe, mature experiences from places like Ruijin City in Jiangxi Province can be referenced to explore leveraging government credit and professional planning to attract large-scale social capital through issuing special cultural protection bonds, cooperating with state-owned cultural tourism platform companies to set up project companies, etc., for the overall protection and infrastructure upgrading of core areas.

6.3 Deepen industrial integration and promote innovative development of business formats

It is essential to go beyond a single visitor mode and deeply integrate the town's advantageous resources. The core is to design and operate composite products that “lead with red culture, base green agriculture, and add color to distinctive intangible cultural heritage.” At the same time, to address the current issues of limited display methods and insufficient appeal to young people, modern technology and creative planning must be introduced. On the interactive level, “Pear Orchard Classrooms” will be established within the orchards, combining seasonal farming and revolutionary history to develop special study courses such as plant rubbings, red printmaking, and revolutionary song pear garden choirs. At the same time, an innovative “I Have a Pear Tree in Duke” online adoption program will be launched, allowing adopters not only to monitor the growth of the pear tree and receive fresh fruit, but also to learn about the stories and protection progress of corresponding villages through mini-programs, extending consumer behavior into ongoing emotional connections and the spread of red culture.

Coordinating the improvement of the professionalism and localization of supporting services. Currently, it is urgent to plan uniformly at the town level, building visitor service centers in core areas (such as Jializhuang) that integrate information consultation, ticketing, rest, and first aid, and scientifically laying out ecological parking lots, A-

level tourist public toilets, and other infrastructure. More distinctive is the expansion of existing "senior canteens" in Nanjie Village, Shenjiazhuang Village, and other villages with improved utilization, transforming them into themed red restaurants during non-dining hours offering themed meals such as "Recalling Hardship and Sweet Meals" and "Zhiqian Farmhouse Cuisine." In terms of talent support, the "New Town Red Cultural Tourism Service Capacity Enhancement Plan" should be implemented, systematically training veteran party members, retired teachers, and young villagers to serve as local guides, homestay housekeepers, and catering staff, maximizing localization of service positions. This not only extends the revenue coverage of the industrial chain but also enhances tourists' authentic cultural experience in the most authentic way.

Promote the integration of red cultural tourism with the development of modern agriculture and other industries, support local capital and returning entrepreneurs in developing leisure agriculture, sightseeing agriculture, ecological agriculture, and agritainment businesses, build a number of ecological agricultural leisure sightseeing bases, create a number of influential rural tourism demonstration sites nationwide, broaden the utilization space for red cultural resources, and help local people increase their income and become prosperous.

6.4 Enhance talent cultivation and strengthen team support

The fundamental aspect of talent development lies in strengthening the leadership and execution capabilities of grass-roots Party organizations. It is necessary to make determined efforts to improve the severely aging structure of the Party membership^[18]. The 'Three Batches' plan can be implemented: First, 'recall a batch of talented individuals' by actively reaching out to Party entrepreneurs and managers who have successfully started businesses outside the village, and inviting them to return home to run for office or serve as development consultants. Second, 'recruit a batch of college students,' by setting up special village-level positions to selectively recruit local college graduates to join the Party and participate in village affairs; third, 'develop a batch of wealth leaders,' giving priority to Party membership for advanced individuals such as major Crown Pear growers and skilled farmers. The goal is to ensure that each village Party branch dynamically reserves 2-3 young reserve cadres under the age of 40. At the same time, the "Party Member Household Linking and Area Responsibility" system is fully implemented. Based on the layout of the villages, each Party member is assigned to maintain fixed contact with 5-10 households. Their responsibilities are not only to explain policies but also to specifically guide these households on how to participate in new business formats such as pear tree adoption, homestay reception, and specialty product sales, thereby converting the mobilization power of Party

organizations into villagers' participation and sense of gain, laying the broadest grassroots foundation for the development of red cultural tourism.

A multi-faceted interaction model is built involving government departments, civil associations, and local residents. Under the guidance of government departments, the role of civil associations is leveraged to absorb members of the public who are interested in participating in the public service utilization of red cultural resources, mobilizing the strength of all sectors to participate in the public management of red cultural resource use. In the process of advancing government work on the utilization of red cultural resources, such as the protection of traditional ancient villages and old revolutionary sites, as well as the collection of red stories, cultural relics, and historical materials, the public is mobilized and engaged as much as possible, utilizing their creativity and striving for the proactive support and cooperation of the general public.

6.5 Improve institutional safeguards and establish a long-term mechanism

With comprehensive public supervision as a guarantee, ensure the credibility and enforcement of the system. It is necessary to establish a "Red Cultural Tourism Project Supervision Group" composed of Party member representatives elected by each village, respected village representatives, and retired teachers or officials. This group has the right to attend relevant joint meetings and independently supervise and inquire into the details of the use of special funds, the quality of repair works, and the operational accounts of cooperative associations throughout the entire process. All plans, projects, financial revenues and expenditures, and profit distribution schemes related to red resources must be publicly announced quarterly on village notice boards and online platforms, with key information translated into charts that are easy for villagers to understand. Through this combined model of "professional supervision, public supervision, and social supervision," we can ensure that power operates under transparency and funds flow under oversight, thereby earning broad and lasting trust from villagers and laying the most solid public opinion foundation for a long-term mechanism.

The preparation of the "Special Plan for the Protection and Utilization of the Former Site of the North China United University in the New Town" must be immediately initiated and should become the 'basic law' for actions across the entire town. The plan should be based on professional surveys, clearly defining the protected areas, construction control zones, and environmental coordination zones for each site, eliminating arbitrary construction in the future. In terms of utilization, the plan must break administrative village boundaries and clarify the spatial layout and functional divisions of the entire town's 'Red Culture Core,

Pear Garden Industrial Belt, and Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience Points,' providing a legal basis for the implementation of the integrated business model of 'Red culture, Agriculture, and Intangible Cultural Heritage.' Once approved by the town Party committee, the plan must have mandatory enforceability.

At the same time, core indicators for the protection and utilization of red resources, such as the preservation rate of local heritage sites, participation in cross-village projects, and the effectiveness of cultivating new cultural tourism formats, must be formally incorporated into the annual performance evaluation system of the village 'two committees,' with a weight of not less than 15%. The evaluation results will be directly linked to village officials' performance bonuses, awards, and the allocation of higher-level project funds. Villages or individuals with outstanding performance (such as Jiali Village) will be given additional project priorities and material rewards, thus forming a rigid working pattern of 'planning-led and assessment-driven.'

7. Conclusions and Enlightments

As an important spiritual and economic resource for rural revitalization, the effectiveness of protecting and utilizing red culture resources relies on the overall coordination of grassroots organizations and the collaborative participation of multiple stakeholders. In the protection and utilization of the former site of North China United University in Xincheng Town, although preliminary practices have been carried out, significant problems remain, such as uneven protection, insufficient integration, lack of funds and technology, weak talent, and gaps in institutional support. Drawing on the advanced experiences of Ruijin City and Zhangjiajie City, grassroots organizations need to follow the 'five-in-one' approach of 'organizational empowerment — resource integration — industry integration — talent cultivation — institutional guarantee,' strengthen cross-village collaboration, broaden funding channels, promote business innovation, optimize talent structures, and improve long-term mechanisms to achieve sustainable protection and efficient utilization of red culture resources. This study focuses on the former site of North China United University in Xincheng Town, exploring the path for rural grassroots organizations in plain areas to lead the protection and utilization of red resources. In the future, the research scope can be further expanded to compare differences in red resource protection and utilization models across various plain regions; to study deeply the application of digital technology in red resource protection and utilization, such as specific implementation scenarios and effects of VR/AR technology; and to explore long-term linkage mechanisms between red resource protection and rural governance and villagers' income growth, providing deeper theoretical and practical support for empowering rural revitalization with red culture resources.

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