

Research on Development and Utilization of Hongshan Culture Resources in Jinzhou Region

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Abstract

The Jinzhou region is a vital component of the Hongshan Cultural zone in western Liaoning, endowed with abundant Hongshan cultural resources. Nevertheless, constrained by the relatively small scale and low ranking of its heritage sites, the region has remained marginalized in academic discourse. Furthermore, its practical preservation and development efforts are hindered by real-world issues such as underutilization, inadequate management and protection, and a lack of social engagement. To address these challenges, this paper puts forward targeted development paradigms: leveraging scientific research to uncover the cultural essence of Hongshan, relying on government coordination to delineate preservation strategies, and fostering culture-tourism integration to establish a robust platform for public participation. The synergistic implementation of these approaches is bound to catalyze the sustainable development of Jinzhou's Hongshan cultural resources.

Keywords: Hongshan Culture; Jinzhou Region; Resource Development and Utilization

1 Introduction

The Hongshan Culture, a vital Neolithic legacy in northern China representing the dawn of Chinese civilization, has long garnered immense scholarly interest and produced a wealth of research. Data from recent issues of the *Chinese Archaeological Yearbook* indicate that the majority of these studies concentrate on analyzing cultural characteristics, typical artifacts, and inter-cultural relationships — achievements that hold profound academic significance. Comparatively, however, the development and utilization of Hongshan cultural resources remain severely under-researched. The academic community largely advocates for a “minimum intervention” approach to site preservation; yet, the core objective of this principle is to safeguard the authenticity of the heritage to maximize its cultural value, not to impose a blanket ban on development. Although an archaeological synthesis is indispensable for an accurate understanding of the Hongshan Culture, the subsequent imperative to “clarify history and ensure rational utilization” warrants equal attention. Furthermore, current scholarship exhibits a stark “regional bias.” Areas hosting mega-sites like Niuheliang, Hongshanhou, and Kazuo Dongshanzui are heavily researched, while regions with smaller Hongshan sites are largely marginalized. This disparity has prompted critical reflection among scholars. Notably, Yu Fuye examined the preservation and utilization of Jinzhou’s cultural heritage, touching upon relevant Hongshan sites [1]. Similarly, Wang Xiufeng highlighted Jinzhou’s Hongshan resources, offering a detailed analysis of the region’s current archaeological landscape at the “3rd Frontier Forum on Hongshan Culture — Ancient State Civilization” in October 2024 [2]. Against this backdrop, an in-depth investigation into the development and utilization of Hongshan cultural resources in the Jinzhou region is not just timely, but highly necessary.

2 Overview of Hongshan Culture Resources in Jinzhou Region

Located in the western Liaoning Corridor, the Jinzhou region boasts diverse topographical features including mountains, hills, and plains, with the Daling River and Xiaoling River flowing through its landscape. These natural conditions provided the Hongshan ancestors with varied ecological environments and living spaces, creating ideal conditions for the formation and development of Hongshan culture. As a result, the area has preserved numerous Hongshan cultural sites along with artifacts from this historical period.(Fig.1).

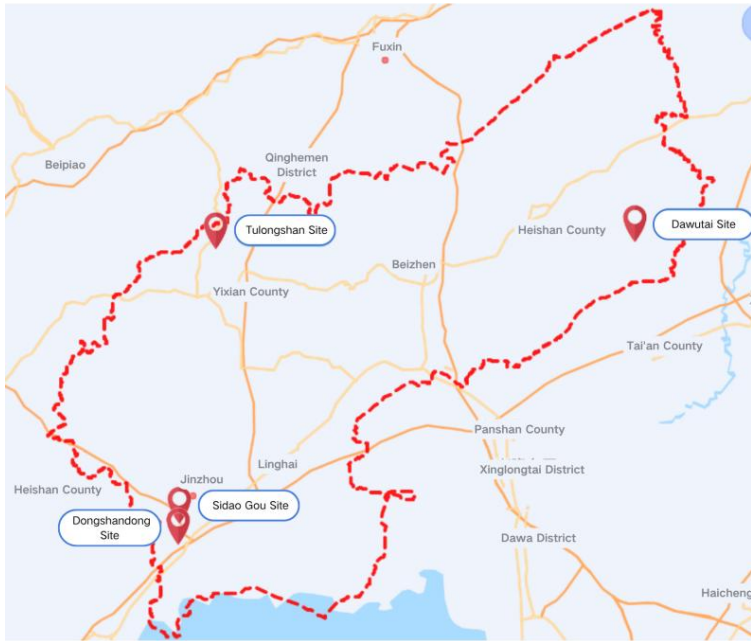


Fig. 1 Distribution Map of Main Hongshan Culture Sites in Jinzhou Area

A. Hongshan Culture Site in Jinzhou Region

- Sidao Gou Site

The Sidao Gou Site, located north of Sidao Gou Village in Songshan Town, Linghai City, Jinzhou, covers an area of approximately 120,000 square meters and has been designated as a county-level cultural heritage protection unit. The site features a cultural layer approximately 0.1 meters thick, primarily containing fragments of stone tools and pottery. The stone tools include chipped axes and hoes, as well as polished stone balls, chisels, arrowheads, and grinding rods, indicating that the Hongshan culture ancestors were in a transitional phase of technological advancement, experimenting with refined processing techniques. Additionally, excavated pottery fragments consist of sandy-brown clay, featuring vessel types such as straight-bellied jars, basins, and vats, adorned with incised patterns, impressed designs, and the characteristic "Z" -shaped motifs of the Hongshan culture. These findings confirm that the site represents a remnant of the Hongshan cultural period.

- Dongshandong Site

The Dongshandong Site is located on the eastern side of Dongshan Village in Songshan Town, Linghai City, Jinzhou, covering an area of approximately 62,500 square meters with a cultural layer thickness of about 0.8 meters. Excavated artifacts include chipped shoulder stone hoes, polished stone grinding plates, and stone axes. The presence of these stone tools indicates that the inhabitants had already mastered relatively advanced stone tool processing techniques. Notably, the shoulder stone hoes exhibit clearly shaped patterns resulting from prolonged hammering and polishing, demonstrating the makers' profound understanding of tool usage. Additionally, the site yielded fragments of sandy gray pottery and brown pottery bearing incised patterns and "Zhi" -shaped motifs. Based on fragment morphology, archaeologists deduced that these artifacts were likely jars, basins, or similar vessels.

- Dawutai Site

The Dawutai Site is located approximately 500 meters northwest of Dawutai Village in Daxing Township, Heishan County, Jinzhou City, situated between the current Raoyang River and Dongsha River. Covering an area of about 20,000 square meters, it is the only site among Jinzhou's Hongshan Culture relics designated as a provincial-level cultural heritage protection unit. The cultural layer at the site is about 1 meter thick. Buried artifacts include stone grinding rods, pottery spinning wheels, and numerous pottery fragments. The pottery fragments are classified into gray clay pottery, red clay pottery, and sandy-brown pottery, featuring main decorative patterns such as incised lines and zigzag motifs. The vessel forms include cylindrical jars, bowls, basins, and urns [3]. (Fig.2).



Fig.2 Information Table of Main Hongshan Culture Sites in Jinzhou Region

- Tulongshan Site

The Tulongshan Site is located on a terrace north of Tulongshan Village in Toutai Town, Yixian County, Jinzhou City, along the northern bank of the Daling River, covering an area of approximately 4,900 square meters. It has now been designated as a municipal-level cultural heritage protection site. The cultural layer at the site is about 1 meter thick, containing artifacts such as polished stone axes and pottery fragments made of two types of red pottery: sandy red pottery and clay red pottery. Decorative patterns include incised lines, zigzag motifs, and concave string patterns. Based on the pottery fragments, the main vessel types include cylindrical jars, vats, and bowls [4].

- Other sites containing relics of the Hongshan Culture

The richness of Hongshan Culture sites in the Jinzhou region is not only reflected in the four confirmed sites—Sidaogou, Dongshandong, Dawutai, and Tulongshan—but also encompasses other archaeological sites containing Hongshan Culture artifacts. The discovery and study of these sites are crucial for comprehensively understanding the distribution patterns and archaeological characteristics of Hongshan Culture in the Jinzhou area. For instance, at the Xia'erdaohe site in Linghai City, researchers have unearthed polished stone axes and adzes, typical Hongshan Culture tools such as slanted-mouth vessels and straight-tubular jars, along with reddish-brown pottery fragments containing "Zhi" character motifs. Similar discoveries have been made at the Bianyan site and Wangxingtun site in Linghai City, as well as the Dahuangdixi site in Yixian County. These sites contain distinctive Hongshan Culture artifacts with profound cultural significance. Systematic organization, integration, and in-depth research of these findings will undoubtedly provide a solid material foundation for the development and utilization of Hongshan Culture resources in the Jinzhou region.

Table 1. Information Table of Main Hongshan Culture Sites in Jinzhou Region

Site Name	Location Area	Protection Level	Cultural Layer Thickness
Sidaogou Site	North of Sidaogou Village, Songshan Town, Linghai City, Jinzhou	120,000m ²	0.1m
Dongshandong Site	East of Dongshan Village, Sungg Town, Linghai City, Jinzhou	66,500m ²	0.8m
Dawutai Site	Northwest of Dawutai Village, Dawn-Ship, Heishan County, Jinzhou	20,00m ²	1m
Tulongshan Site	Northeast of Tulongshan Village, Toutai Town, Yixian County, Jinzhou	4,900 m ²	1m

B. Distribution and Characteristics of Red Mountain Culture Site Resources

• Distribution of Hongshan Culture in Jinzhou Region

The geographical locations of the Hongshan Culture sites, combined with the topography of Jinzhou region, provide clear insights into the lifestyle and cultural characteristics of Hongshan ancestors. These cultural sites are primarily distributed across Linghai City, Heishan County, and Yixian County, predominantly situated on riverbank terraces near water sources to facilitate agricultural activities and daily life. The distribution patterns of Hongshan cultural artifacts further suggest that social structures exhibited strong clustering tendencies, indicating the emergence of relatively stable settlement patterns. These features collectively reflect the Hongshan ancestors' adaptive wisdom in harmonizing with natural environments and actively shaping cultural lifestyles. From a cultural resource development perspective, the Hongshan Cultural Zone also hosts other historical sites and abundant natural resources. For instance, the vicinity of Yixian's Tulongshan Site includes significant cultural landmarks such as the Wanfotang Grottoes and Fengguo Temple, facilitating collaborative cultural resource development initiatives.

• Archaeological Characteristics of Hongshan Culture in Jinzhou Region

Overall, the Hongshan culture resources in Jinzhou region reveal the unique cultural characteristics of this area during the late Neolithic period. On one hand, the distribution of archaeological sites, geographical environment, and unearthed artifacts align with the cultural commonalities of the Hongshan culture. Taking Dawutai as an example, pottery spindle whorls, stone grinding rods, and sand-tempered pottery excavated from this site demonstrate relatively advanced production and living standards of the time. The discovery of straight cylindrical jars directly indicates sacrificial activities associated with the Hongshan culture, reflecting the ancient inhabitants' belief in severing ties with heaven. On the other hand, Hongshan cultural resources in Jinzhou exhibit distinct regional characteristics. For instance, stone tools unearthed at local sites outnumber pottery artifacts and exhibit greater typological diversity, which may be closely related to the unique coastal geological environment of Jinzhou. The availability of raw materials for stone tool production and their practical advantages for foraging and hunting activities further contribute to these findings. These archaeological perspectives highlighting the distinctive features of Hongshan cultural resources in this region will serve as key entry points for

their development and utilization.

3 Present Situation of Hongshan Culture Resources Development in Jinzhou Region

A. Social cognitive impairment

In the research on the development and utilization of Hongshan cultural resources in Jinzhou region, the issue of insufficient social participation stands out prominently. Based on the author's daily observations and interviews, few residents of Jinzhou can accurately describe fundamental information about local Hongshan cultural resources. Those who have participated in related activities often associate Hongshan culture with more renowned sites like Niuheliang Ruins and Dongshanzui Ruins. For instance, the "2nd Hongshan Culture Festival & 1st Hongshan Cultural Fair" jointly organized by multiple commercial companies in Jinzhou on December 12, 2024, while attracting some public attention, primarily focused on commercial aspects emphasizing the value of jade artifacts in Hongshan culture without establishing any connection to Jinzhou's local Hongshan cultural resources. In other words, hosting such events in other cities would not enhance their impact. This phenomenon is not accidental, revealing that the public in Jinzhou has a vague understanding of local Hongshan culture, let alone active participation in its preservation efforts.

B. Low development utilization rate

From both academic research and practical development perspectives, the Hongshan culture resources in Jinzhou region, despite their profound historical value and cultural significance, remain in a neglected state. Currently, only a few archaeological sites have received attention, while the vast majority of Hongshan cultural sites remain undeveloped or semi-developed. On one hand, limited academic focus on these cultural resources has resulted in scarce scholarly research outcomes. This not only restricts public understanding of these precious heritage sites but also prevents their full utilization potential. On the other hand, the remote locations and small scale of Hongshan cultural sites pose significant challenges for development projects, requiring meticulous planning and substantial financial investment. However, the lengthy return on investment cycle and lack of immediate economic returns have diminished interest from both government agencies and private investors. Consequently, the development of Hongshan cultural resources in Jinzhou has lagged behind, further hindering site preservation and utilization while limiting the transformation of cultural heritage value. This has created a vicious cycle that urgently requires resolution.

C. Insufficient management and protection

A comprehensive review of the current status of Hongshan Culture heritage sites in Jinzhou reveals concerning management and conservation challenges. Among these sites, only the Dawutai Site in Heishan County has been designated as a provincial-level cultural relic protection unit, while most others remain municipal or county-level protected sites. Despite this designation, conflicts between heritage preservation efforts and local residents'

daily needs, coupled with inadequate daily supervision and basic maintenance, have led to severe human-induced disturbances at many sites. Compounded by natural factors such as weathering and erosion, the preservation status of Hongshan Cultural Resources has become increasingly dire. This phenomenon not only highlights serious deficiencies in management and conservation practices but also exposes systemic issues including insufficient enforcement of cultural heritage protection regulations and a shortage of specialized professionals. At its core, the root cause lies in the failure to integrate cultural resources with surrounding environments and communities, preventing their transformation into sustainable economic drivers and undermining the potential for self-sustaining cultural development.

4 Development Ideas of Hongshan Culture Resources in Jinzhou Region

A. Cultural-tourism integration promotes social participation

Cultural-tourism integration serves as the most direct approach to cultural resource development and an effective means of fostering social engagement while enhancing public understanding of cultural heritage. By leveraging this integration, Linghai City's four archaeological sites—including Sidao Gou Ruins, Dongshan East Ruins, Xiaoerdao River Ruins, Bianyan Ruins, and Wangxington Ruins—can be connected to form a thematic Hongshan Culture tourism route. This allows visitors to systematically explore Hongshan cultural relics in Jinzhou region while experiencing the city's unique natural landscapes. Similarly, Dawutai Ruins in Heishan County and Tulong Mountain Ruins with Dahuangdi West Ruins in Yixian County could be linked together. These two routes could be combined into an educational program titled "Hongshan Culture Exploration Journey," transforming static cultural relics into dynamic cultural experiences. Such immersive experiences would also facilitate personalized promotion of Jinzhou's Hongshan culture. Additionally, aligning with modern tourism market demands, cultural and creative tourism products featuring Jinzhou's Hongshan culture could be developed. For instance, designing souvenir items and creative furniture incorporating the distinctive zigzag patterns from Hongshan pottery alongside local specialties would bring cultural heritage closer to daily life. This approach would also help local residents recognize the economic and social potential of Hongshan cultural resources, thereby increasing their enthusiasm for cultural preservation and utilization.

B. Scientific Research Leads to the Exploration of Connotations

In the process of developing and utilizing cultural resources, apart from formal adaptations, scientific research must serve as the prerequisite and benchmark. Therefore, it is essential to mobilize research efforts to guide the value exploration of Hongshan culture. Considering the relatively low recognition of Hongshan culture in Jinzhou among academia and the public, there is a need to call for scholars to contribute their voices. Firstly, academic symposiums on Hongshan cultural resources in Jinzhou could be organized to jointly explore the characteristics of Hongshan culture distributed in the region, while comparing it with contemporaneous cultures from different areas to

uncover unique resource features. Simultaneously, such symposiums should encourage interdisciplinary exchanges and collaboration to achieve more comprehensive and in-depth research outcomes. These findings can be disseminated to the public through publications, exhibitions, WeChat articles, and other formats to enhance the influence of Hongshan culture in Jinzhou. Secondly, given the limited publicly available materials on Hongshan cultural resources in Jinzhou and the chaotic, uneven-quality information available online—particularly the naming overlap between Linghai City's Sidao Gou Site and Xinjiang's Sidao Gou Site—which may lead to public misunderstandings—it is necessary to establish a research network platform for Hongshan culture studies in Jinzhou based on symposium outcomes and expert opinions, enabling widespread sharing of cultural resource information and maximizing public education efforts. Thirdly, the research capabilities of faculty and students in cultural heritage and museology at Bohai University in Jinzhou should not be overlooked. Close collaboration between the government and universities can effectively advance research projects. For instance, organizing students to conduct systematic archaeological surveys and observations of Hongshan cultural sites in Jinzhou can provide a more accurate understanding of the actual conditions of these sites. Such scientific research practices provide teachers and students with opportunities to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application. From the perspective of resource development and utilization, it represents an exploration that combines specialization with innovation, injecting fresh vitality into the inheritance and development of Hongshan culture.

C. The government coordinates to clarify protection priorities

The prerequisite for resource recovery and utilization is that “The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.” [5] Therefore, it must be based on scientific conservation of the Hongshan Culture, which further relies on comprehensive government planning. This plan should be based on in-depth research into the current status of Hongshan Culture sites in Jinzhou region, integrating multidisciplinary knowledge from archaeology, history, sociology, anthropology, and drawing lessons from successful cultural heritage conservation cases both domestically and internationally. The planning process should first include scientific assessments of Hongshan Culture sites, covering basic information and preservation conditions. Particularly for larger sites like Sidao Gou, Dongshan East, and Dawutai, detailed environmental impact analyses are essential. On this foundation, new protected zones should be delineated along with long-term conservation measures such as site reinforcement. More importantly, close collaboration must be established between these Hongshan Culture sites and surrounding communities to align interests. For instance, the government could initiate a special protection fund for Hongshan Culture sites to develop themed villages. These villages should avoid large-scale demolition and reconstruction, instead adopting the “Moni Mountain Intangible Cultural Heritage Town” model [6] to revitalize cultural resources. This approach would enable villagers to become direct beneficiaries and protectors of cultural heritage value, achieving sustainable development through “shared use, joint construction, and collective benefits” of Hongshan Culture.

5 Conclusion

The distribution of Hongshan Culture sites and artifacts in Jinzhou region provides invaluable physical evidence for studying prehistoric social structures, economic patterns, and cultural characteristics in this area. Their value should not be measured by quantity or hierarchical status, but rather recognized as irreplaceable regional features for scientific utilization and development. This process requires gradual progress: advancing scientific research to accurately understand the unique essence of Jinzhou's red culture, government-led macro-level oversight, and extensive public participation in cultural resource preservation and utilization – enabling citizens to truly become "masters of their heritage." Ultimately, resource development must mobilize multi-stakeholder collaboration, establishing a protection and utilization mechanism involving academia, government agencies, cultural organizations, and the public. Only through such cooperative models can Jinzhou's Hongshan cultural resources achieve greater impact and enduring significance.

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