

Research on the Current Situation of Traditional Village Protection and Tourism Development in China

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Abstract

The protection and development of traditional villages is an important issue at present. This study analyzes the layout of traditional villages in the country and estimates the development status of traditional villages, uses big data analysis and GIS spatial analysis methods to estimate the development status of traditional Chinese villages, analyzes the problems existing in the protection of traditional Chinese villages, and finally divides the protection of traditional Chinese villages into five types. This research has shown that undeveloped traditional villages are actually more likely to be destroyed over time, and activation protection is a more scientific method of traditional village protection.

Keywords

Tourism Development, Traditional Village, Protection

1. Introduction

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the protection of traditional villages, starting from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Finance and other departments jointly issued documents, and has published a total of five batches of Chinese traditional villages. At present, there are a total of 6819 traditional villages on the national register. In addition to the national level, provinces, municipalities (autonomous regions) have also carried out the certification and protection of traditional villages.

The protection of traditional villages is a very difficult problem, and a large number of scholars have conducted comparative studies on many challenges

faced by tourism development and protection synergy, and also proposed ways to revitalize tourism in traditional villages and solve the solutions to diversified livelihoods. [Lin and Li \(2019\)](#) summarize the traditional villages in Yunnan that have not developed tourism into four types: one is the traditional villages that have not yet been settled by capital but have certain potential, the second is the traditional villages that are constantly exploring the way to survive, the third is the “traditional villages that are about to disappear”, and the fourth is a traditional village that is “untouched”. In general, the hollowing out of traditional villages without tourism development is more prominent, more on the verge of extinction, and less able to protect culture. For example, [Wang et al. \(2019\)](#) found through comprehensive assessment that the rurality of such villages is low and the balance is weak, and its rurality is facing decline in urban-rural interaction; [Wu \(2017\)](#) believes that the protection and development of traditional villages requires a lot of capital investment, and the state’s financial allocation can be used to improve the village environment. Protecting residential buildings on the verge of collapse and subsidizing intangible cultural heritage bearers in villages, but these funds can only be one-time, and they are a drop in the bucket, and when a large number of villagers go out to work, traditional villages will once again become “hollow villages”. Therefore, only by revitalizing rural industries and retaining villagers can traditional villages have a living carrier.

Traditional village tourism development can have a variety of development methods, from the main body of development, can be divided into government-led, government + company, company + farmer type, government + company + farmer type, government + village collective cooperative type, Villagers spontaneously type a variety of development methods ([Huang & Cao, 2012](#)). In general, the tourism development model of the government + company can have greater investment, the scale and efficiency of tourism development will be greater, the protection of buildings will be greater ([Chen, 2019](#)), and the investment in intangible cultural heritage will be more ([Li, 2014](#)). However, farmers’ incomes have rarely improved, and they are particularly prone to excessive commercialization. However, the development method of the government + village collective can enable local villagers to obtain greater benefits ([Huang & Cao, 2012](#)), but the ability of tourism development is relatively weak, and it will be easy to build randomly, and the integrity of the original building is more likely to be destroyed.

2. Literature Review

Related research mainly focuses on the following three aspects: methods of protecting traditional villages; tourism development and traditional village protection; and problems existing in the protection of traditional villages.

2.1. Methods of Protecting Traditional Villages

[Sluman \(1985\)](#) believes that tourism brings economic resources to conservation and is an effective way of heritage conservation. [Nakamura \(2013\)](#) believes that

encouraging indigenous participation is an effective way to protect cultural heritage. Said et al. (2013) research shows that raising residents' awareness of protection, innovating financing mechanisms, and stimulating the potential of various stakeholders are effective heritage protection measures.

2.2. Tourism Development and Traditional Village Protection

Tourism brings economic resources to conservation, is an effective way of heritage conservation (Sluman, 1985). Gao et al. (2017) believe that rural tourism is a key approach to rural development and poverty alleviation, and propose an integrative and sustainable Rural Tourism-based Traditional Village Revitalization model to better understand the relationship between rural tourism and village revitalization. Wang & Bramwell (2012) analyze the priorities of heritage protection and tourism development from the perspective of political economy and governance.

2.3. Problems Existing in the Protection of Traditional Villages

The combination of tourism and cultural heritage protection should not be blind, and further thinking is needed (Fyfe, 2008). Zhou et al. (2022) take Mulu Village in Shangri-la City as the example, analyze the problems existing in the current status of traditional village conservation, and proposes the corresponding development strategies. Lack of government support, residents farming, deforestation and other factors are not conducive to heritage protection (Sarfo-Mensah, 2014).

A review of relevant studies found that: the protection and tourism development of traditional villages have attracted much attention from researchers, but from the perspective of village tourism development, there are few studies that quantitatively estimate the development status of traditional villages. This study analyzes the tourism development of traditional villages, estimates the overall development status of traditional villages, analyzes the types of traditional village protection in China, and then proposes a scientific method for traditional village protection and tourism development.

The article is organized as follows: Analyze the spatial distribution of Chinese traditional villages; estimate the development status of Chinese traditional villages in general; analyze the types of Chinese traditional village protection; put forward specific traditional village protection methods and suggestions.

3. Spatial Distributions of Traditional Chinese Villages

Statistics of five batches of state-level traditional villages found that Guizhou Province and Yunnan Province have the largest number of traditional villages, accounting for 10.65% and 10.38% of the total number of villages, respectively; followed by Hunan, Zhejiang and Shanxi. Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Jilin and other traditional villages have the lowest number, accounting for less than 0.5% (Table 1).

Table 1. National traditional village distribution statistics (except Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan).

Provincial administrative divisions	There are many traditional villages	Proportion
Guizhou Province	726	10.65%
Yunnan Province	708	10.38%
Hunan Province	658	9.65%
Zhejiang Province	636	9.33%
Shanxi Province	550	8.07%
Fujian Province	496	7.27%
Anhui Province	400	5.87%
Jiangxi Province	343	5.03%
Sichuan Province	333	4.88%
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	279	4.09%
Guangdong Province	263	3.86%
Hebei Province	206	3.02%
Henan Province	206	3.02%
Hubei Province	205	3.01%
Shandong Province	125	1.83%
Qinghai Province	123	1.80%
Shaanxi Province	113	1.66%
Chongqing Municipality	109	1.60%
Hainan	62	0.91%
Gansu Province	54	0.79%
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	46	0.67%
Tibet Autonomous Region	35	0.51%
Jiangsu Province	33	0.48%
Liaoning Province	30	0.44%
Beijing	22	0.32%
Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	18	0.26%
Heilongjiang Province	14	0.21%
Jilin Province	11	0.16%
Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	6	0.09%
Shanghai	5	0.07%
Tianjin Municipality	4	0.06%

Using ArcGIS software, the nuclear density analysis of the distribution of traditional villages in the country was carried out, and the traditional nuclear density map was obtained (**Figure 1**). The principle of kernel density calculation is as follows Equation (1), where $\lambda(s)$ is the kernel density estimate at the s -point; r

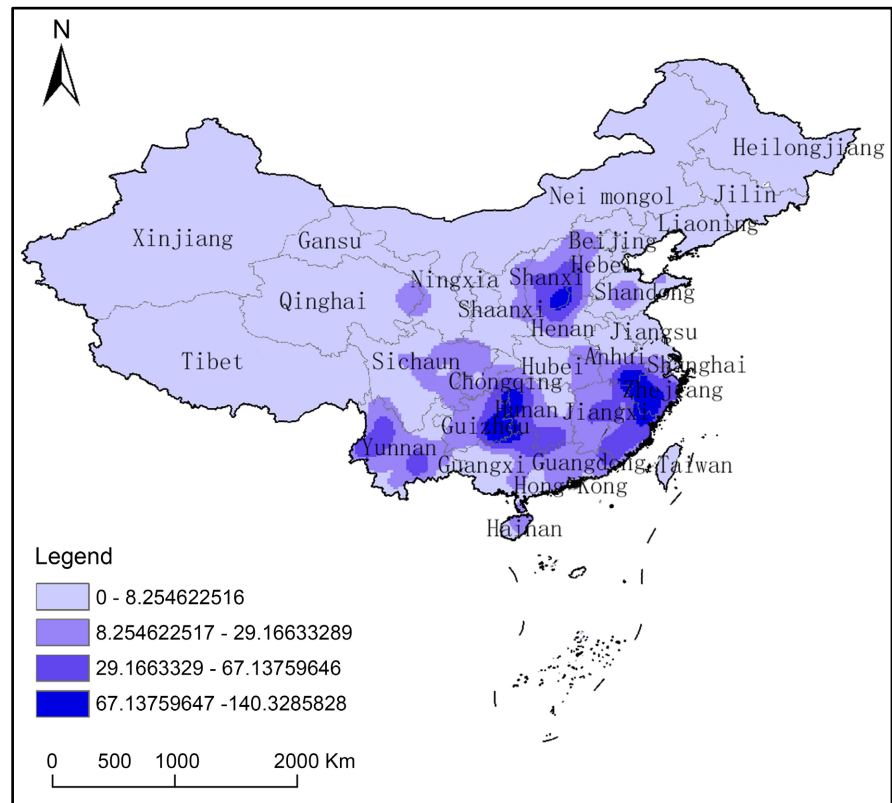


Figure 1. Distribution of nuclear density in traditional villages.

is the search radius of the kernel density function; n is the number of dining spots or accommodation points around the village; φ is the distance between points l and s d_{ls} . The weight of.

$$\lambda(s) = \sum_l^n \frac{1}{\pi r^2} \varphi\left(\frac{d_{ls}}{r}\right) \tag{1}$$

It can be found that:

First, traditional Chinese villages are significantly concentrated in the southwest and east China, with the fewest in the northeast and northwest.

Second, from the perspective of provinces, the largest number of traditional villages in the country is Guizhou Province, with a total of 724. The provinces of Guizhou, Yunnan and Hunan are home to most of China’s traditional villages and are among the top three in terms of the number of traditional villages, followed by zhejiang, Fujian, Anhui and Jiangxi. Tianjin has the smallest number of traditional villages in the country, with a total of four. From the county point of view, She County, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, has the largest number of traditional Chinese villages, with a total of 148. Liping County, Congjiang County and Leishan County of Guizhou Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture all rank high in the number of traditional villages.

Third, traditional Chinese villages mainly include several concentration areas, which are mainly concentrated in China’s large mountainous areas, including: Hengduan Mountain (southwest Yunnan area), Wuling Mountain and Nanling

area of Wushan Mountain (junction of Chongqing, Hunan and Guizhou, and parts of Guangxi), Wuyishan area (part of Jiangxi and Fujian), Huangshan Lushan area, Taihang Mountain and Lüliang Mountain area.

4. Overall Estimates of Tourism Development in Traditional Chinese Villages

4.1. Research Methods and Data Sources

In order to scientifically evaluate the tourism development status of traditional villages in China, this project uses big data analysis and GIS spatial analysis methods to evaluate the tourism development of all traditional villages in China.

4.2. Evaluation Principles and Indicators

To comprehensively assess the overall tourism development of traditional villages in more than 6000 countries in China, it is impossible to adopt the method of field investigation one by one. Based on the number of hotels (homestays) and restaurants, this project uses big data and GIS spatial analysis methods to evaluate the tourism development of each traditional village. The basic principle is: first count the number of hotels (homestays) and catering POIs (points of interest) around each traditional village (including the inside of the village), and then determine the general situation of tourism development in each traditional village according to the number of these numbers. It can be argued that the more developed the catering and accommodation industry in a traditional village, the better its tourism development.

4.3. Data Sources

The longitude and latitude information of each traditional village is obtained by using location anti-check technology by traditional village names; the POI data of catering and accommodation in the country (the total amount of data is more than one million), and the POI data is the national data in 2020.

4.4. Analytical Methods

Firstly, according to the radius of 500 meters, the buffer zone of all traditional villages is drawn by ArcGIS software; then the buffer zone is superimposed and analyzed with the POI data of catering and accommodation to obtain all the catering and accommodation data within 500 meters of the traditional village; and then use ArcGIS's spatial statistics function calculates the number of catering and accommodation POI points in each traditional village.

4.5. Results

The analysis found (**Table 2**) that there were 1461 villages with between 1 - 20 catering points around traditional villages, accounting for 23.61% of the total number of villages, 20 - 50. There are 187 villages between them, accounting for 3.02% of the total; there are 95 villages between 50 - 100, accounting for 1.53% of

the total. There are only 115 villages with more than 100 surrounding villages, accounting for only 2.5% of the total; the number of villages with 0 surrounding dining points is 5016, accounting for 81.05% of the total.

The analysis found (Table 3) that 79.29% of the country's traditional villages did not yet have accommodation facilities, in addition, 19.89% of traditional villages had accommodation facilities below 50. The remaining traditional villages with more than 50 accommodation facilities are less than 1% of the total number.

As shown in Table 4, among the 6819 traditional villages in the country, there are 1079 villages with catering and accommodation facilities in the surrounding areas, accounting for only 15.82% of the total number, and 68.66% of traditional villages have neither food nor accommodation. Basically, it can be considered that there is no tourism development.

There are 6819 traditional Villages in China, but in fact, there are only 1461 traditional villages with tourism development, accounting for only 23% of the

Table 2. Statistics on the status of catering facilities in traditional Chinese villages.

Number of dining spots	Number of villages	Proportion
0	5016	81.05%
1 - 20	1461	23.61%
20 - 50	187	3.02%
50 - 100	95	1.53%
100 - 150	30	0.48%
150 - 200	14	0.23%
200 or more	16	0.26%

Table 3. Coverage table of village accommodation facilities.

Number of accommodations	Number of villages	Proportion
0	5407	79.29%
0 - 50	1356	19.89%
50 - 100	34	0.50%
100 - 200	12	0.18%
200 or more	10	0.15%

Table 4. Statistical table of catering and accommodation facilities around villages.

Surrounding facilities	Number of villages	Proportion
No food, no accommodation	4682	68.66%
There are meals and no accommodation	724	10.62%
There is no accommodation without catering	334	4.90%
There are meals and accommodations	1079	15.82%

total proportion. Attention needs to be paid to the protection and tourism development of traditional villages that have no tourism development at all. Traditional villages, where a considerable proportion of overtourism development has emerged, need to be vigilant against the destruction of traditional villages by overtourism development. There are 115 overtourism developments (more than 100 restaurants) in traditional villages, which is prone to irreversible damage to traditional village culture.

5. Problems in the Protection of Traditional Chinese Villages

In order to fully understand the protection status of traditional villages, we found that the protection status of traditional villages in China can be divided into the following categories: overtourism, slow decay, bead loss, withering and living protection.

5.1. Overtourism Type

Some traditional villages have too high a degree of tourism development, too much investment, and too many tourists, which has caused great pressure on the cultural and ecological protection of traditional villages. The main manifestations are as follows: First, locals are squeezed out by the foreign population. In some traditional villages, there are more non-local operators and fewer indigenous people, and most locals rent their houses to foreign merchants and relocate to other places, such as Shuanglang, Xizhou and other villages. There are also traditional villages that have been relocated by tourism development companies, such as Talpo Village and Anfen in Yunqiu Mountain Villages, etc. Second, there are still obvious architectural protection problems in some overtourished traditional villages. These traditional villages generally have a relatively strict planning and management system, and the traditional buildings are maintained relatively well from the outside. However, many houses are still problematic (e.g. Hongcun) or are in conflict with residents because villagers are not allowed to repair their houses. At the same time, there are also a large number of imitation and even illegal buildings, destroying the spatial pattern or visual landscape of the original traditional villages.

The third is cultural performance. Due to excessive commercial development in traditional villages, the craftsmanship of intangible culture has gradually disappeared, and commercialized literary and artistic performances have gradually separated intangible cultural resources from the cultural location of traditional village villagers themselves and become an external tool. For example, a project team investigating Zhaoxing Dongzhai found that villagers only regard local culture as a tool for performance, and their language, costumes, and festivals are declining.

5.2. Slow Decay Type

Some traditional villages, the location is better, has a certain tourism develop-

ment foundation, a certain degree of tourism development, there are also a certain number of tourists, there are also a certain number of accommodation facilities in the village, and have a more detailed protection plan, the tourism industry is not developed enough, its protection often has the following problems: First, the gradual outflow of residents. In addition to the development of tourism, due to the relevant regulations on the protection of traditional villages, the development of other industries has been limited. This kind of village tourism industry is not enough to support the full employment of residents, so the problem of outflow of residents from these traditional villages is still very serious. Second, building protection is struggling to maintain. Also due to the underdevelopment of the industry, the huge repair funds have been relying on government blood transfusion subsidies, and it is difficult to form a virtuous circle. Third, traditional industries are difficult to sustain. Due to the small market demand and low popularity, the traditional industries in these traditional villages still struggle to survive in the form of workshops, and their ability to resist risks is extremely poor.

5.3. Bead Type

At present, there are still some traditional villages in China, due to the remote geographical location, poor traffic conditions, less contact with the outside world, its traditional production methods, lifestyles, etc. have been preserved, these traditional villages such as the pearls of the sea, become the living fossils of China's traditional villages, is a typical living traditional village, both typical traditional buildings, but also guardians of these traditional villagers. However, the protection of these traditional villages still has the following problems:

The first is the fragility of cultural protection. The reason why the traditional culture of these traditional villages is better protected is that their transportation is unchanged, and with the further improvement of the level of urbanization, especially the acceleration of rural development, it is difficult for these traditional villages to maintain their traditional production methods and lifestyles. Second, the premise of traditional culture preservation is that the traditional village has a very low industrial level and a low living standard. These situations are unfair to the residents of traditional villages. The development aspirations of the residents cannot be sacrificed in order to maintain the traditional culture of these traditional villages.

5.4. Wither Type

There are a large number of traditional villages in China that belong to this type, this kind of village has been very dilapidated, the indigenous people basically go out to work, only some elderly people stay in the local area, there is no foreign population, it is a typical hollow village. Such villages have the following serious problems: First, there is a serious loss of population. In many villages, only some elderly people with difficulties in life remain behind. The reason for the popula-

tion loss in many villages is even that the village has been rated as a national traditional village, and there are a large number of traditional buildings that need to be protected, and residents cannot renovate their houses. Therefore, villagers with better conditions often choose to move elsewhere. Second, there is no industry. Even what little agriculture remained was gradually dying out. Because only some elderly people with difficulties are left behind, these elderly people often rely on government subsidies and some sporadic plantings in front of and behind houses. These traditional villages have become industrial deserts, and at the same time, due to the lack of popularity, or the excessive cost of building protection and renovation, these villages do not see the hope of traditional tourism development. Third, traditional buildings have become ruined. Because many buildings are on the protection list, but the buildings themselves are seriously damaged, resulting in a large number of residents moving out, and in some places, the government has paid for them. However, the tourism industry or other related industries in these villages have not developed, and a large number of traditional buildings have been vacant for a long time, and the government has only a small amount of funds to maintain the status quo of the buildings, resulting in the ruins of the building complex.

5.5. Active Protection Type

At present, many places have carried out a lot of useful explorations on how to protect traditional villages and at the same time make traditional villages continue to develop. The living protection of traditional villages is a typical representative of them, these traditional villages do not solidly protect the “living” factors of traditional villages, but maintain and develop the “living” factors of traditional villages, and integrate them with the positive products of the progress of the times to achieve sustainable development, for example, the traditional villages of Songyang, Zhejiang Province, are a good example of living protection in recent years. Although some young people in these traditional villages are still working in other places, the moderate development of tourism has attracted some young people to return to the village, operate some small book bars, tea rooms, etc., or return to the village for tourism + agriculture and other production methods.

6. Conclusion

In summary, it can be found that although the protection of traditional villages in China has received great attention and the state has also introduced a series of policies and financial support, the protection of traditional villages is still a very difficult task. The harm of overtourism to the protection of traditional villages is significant, but the damage to traditional villages without industry is also even more serious, although the original traditional villages still exist, extremely fragile, the activation and protection of traditional villages is a beneficial exploration, but the activation and protection of traditional villages require continuous

investment of funds and manpower.

7. Suggestions

The five types of traditional village protection described in this paper: overtourism, slow decay, bead, wither, and active protection. Among them, active protection is a desirable method of traditional village protection, and the other four types reflect the current problems in traditional village protection. This study recommends:

Utilize activation protection to protect traditional villages. Appropriate development of traditional villages, such as the development of tourism, allows traditional villages to “live”. Using industrialization to protect traditional villages can relieve the pressure of the current lack of village protection funds to a certain extent, and it is also conducive to the inheritance and development of traditional culture. Cultural inheritance makes the development of traditional villages sustainable.

Properly solve the problems existing in tourism development and traditional village protection. First of all, tourism development is an effective way to protect traditional villages, but the problem of over-development should be avoided. Secondly, investment in human resources is an important aspect of the development of traditional village tourism. At present, China’s rural talents are mainly concentrated in big cities, and there is a shortage of rural talents. It is necessary to formulate policies and develop projects to attract talents back to the countryside. Finally, tourism development needs funds, and it is not enough to rely on the capital investment of traditional village residents. Financing policies should be introduced to attract social capital investment.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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