



# Study on the Protection and Utilization of Traditional Ethnic Villages in the Tibetan-Qiang Yi Corridor

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## Abstract

Traditional ethnic villages are historical inheritance and cultural crystallization, precious wealth of the country and the people. They bear the soul and memory of the nation, and are the key and focal point of rural revitalization in ethnic areas. Therefore, it is of great significance to strengthen the protection of traditional villages in the Tibetan-Qiang Yi Corridor. Although the previous studies have covered all aspects and made some achievements, there are still some limitations and deficiencies, which cannot generalize their conclusions. Therefore, based on previous research results on the protection and utilization of traditional villages in the Tibetan-Qiang Yi Corridor, this paper selects typical Tibetan-Qiang Yi villages and analyzes common problems in the protection and utilization of traditional villages in the Tibetan-Qiang Yi corridor through field research, such as village hollowing out, slow agricultural development, single protection and utilization methods, and great protection difficulties. Based on this analysis, the causes of the above problems are analyzed. Suggestions on the protection and utilization of traditional villages in the Tibetan-Qiang Yi corridor are given to provide some empirical basis for other similar studies.

## Subject Areas

Urban Planning and Management

## Keywords

Traditional Villages, Protection, Utilize, Countermeasure Research

## 1. Introduction

The destination of ancient villages depends on the contemporary value of villag-

es, that is, whether the values of economy, culture, architecture, aesthetics, humanity and geography have one or several elements needed for the sustainable development of contemporary villages. Traditional villages retain primitive architectural features, time honored history and culture, as well as traditional festivals and folk customs handed down from generation to generation, which are the essence of traditional farming civilization as well as important historical and cultural heritages in China. Traditional villages have witnessed the development of thousands of years of agricultural civilization in China, and play an irreplaceable and important role in historical and cultural research and cultural industry development. They contain extremely high cultural value and research significance. In the process of global economic integration, the cultural value of traditional villages has become increasingly prominent and rapidly improved, which has attracted the attention of various research fields. With the continuous improvement of China's cultural heritage protection system and the rise of the development of traditional culture, the protection of traditional villages has gradually been put on the agenda of the government. On the other hand, the protection and utilization of traditional villages in the accelerated process of urbanization in the social environment, there are many contradictions.

## 2. Protection and Utilization Status of Traditional Villages

The Dictionary records that a village is “a place where villagers live in compact communities”, which means today's village. Therefore, a village is the most basic constituent unit of a country and society, which is gradually expanded from a single ethnic group to several ethnic groups, and is formed by the common and universal needs in production and life. Therefore, villages have been relatively stable for a long time. Except for relationships between villages due to in-laws, market trade or distribution of geographical resources, a small number of people flow to cities based on individual or family development, and the rest are basically independent. The rapid development of cities, accompanied by the reform and opening up, has attracted most of the young and strong labor force in rural areas. Villages are on the edge of empty nests or soon empty nests. In recent years, the state has strengthened the protection of traditional villages, and relevant protection systems and measures have been introduced in succession, which have timely saved many traditional villages, but a considerable number of villages cannot avoid the end of disappearance, which will be an irreversible loss to the history and culture of the whole Chinese nation [1].

In the process of modernization and urbanization, traditional villages are facing the same common crisis as other villages. The survival, adaptation, evolution, transformation and extinction of many traditional village-based cultures are unavoidable major issues in the current economic and social development. According to statistics, since the 1980s, the number of existing traditional villages in China only accounted for 1.9% of the total number of administrative villages in the country, and there were less than 5000 villages with high protection

value. By 2010, there were less than 3000 rare traditional villages. Meanwhile, existing traditional villages generally suffered from industrial decline, population hollowing out, lack of protection funds and cultural ecology serious damage, unsound laws and regulations, imperfect management mechanism, simple living environment, deterioration of ecological environment, lagging awareness of villagers' protection, single tourism development mode, weakened cohesion of villagers and other problems.

With the continuous improvement of the protection system of cultural heritage and the upsurge of the development of traditional culture, the protection of traditional villages has gradually been put on the agenda of the government. On the other hand, the protection and utilization of traditional villages show a lot of contradictions under the social environment of accelerating urbanization process. In this context, how to protect and develop traditional villages has become the focus of academic attention. The current academic circle focuses on the following protection modes for traditional villages in China.

### **2.1. *In Situ* Protection Mode**

Museum-style protection: "preservation" is the core work of museum-style protection, which mainly involves building traditional villages into museums. Funded by the government or social organizations, new organizations are established to maintain the operation and development of traditional villages, emphasizing the authenticity, integrity and originality of protection. It is manifested in the following two forms: first, collection and protection. In order to save endangered culture and dig cultural value, the traditional museum-style conservation mode is implemented. This model not only includes the protection of a variety of material cultural heritage, but also includes the protection of local culture, traditional handicrafts, folk customs, rural memory and other intangible cultural heritage, which are essential cultural symbols in traditional culture. However, most of these cultural symbols are scattered among the folk, so they must be centrally protected through collection and sorting, and the "people-oriented" protection concept should be upheld to tap the development potential of traditional villages. Second, activation and protection. The form of collection protection is mainly the protection of folk houses and utensils in traditional villages [2]. On the basis of protecting folk houses and utensils, life protection takes the protection of "folk house tradition" as an important content. By excavating and preserving the functions of traditional folk houses, this kind of "traditional life" continues to exist in reality, so as to integrate traditional folk houses with the local ecological environment and cultural environment.

### **2.2. Protection Mode of Relocation in Different Places**

The protection mode of relocation is also known as collage protection, mainly for villages with scattered historical relics and traditional buildings. If the overall preservation is not good, the list is not accepted, and the protection is not in-

cluded, individual old residences will be moved to one place and a new “historic area” will be built for protection. In short, it is to centrally protect and display the precious traditional dwellings scattered among the people. For example, Guanzhong Folk House Museum in Xi’an and Bengbu Folk House Exposition Park in Anhui collect scattered and even endangered ancient folk houses and replace, rebuild and repair them. This can not only achieve better preservation effect, but also deepen people’s understanding and experience of traditional history and culture in the process of people’s observation and experience. It should be said that the traditional architecture is the most valuable only in its original site, can not be collected and moved it, can not only for the benefit of tourism and “transformation”, can not make the building into a “cultural relic”, lose the original environment and the original population, the original authenticity disappeared, the ultimate goal is to protect cultural relics.

### **2.3. Mode of Tourism Development and Protection**

**Government-led mode:** Government-led mode refers to the unified planning, development and management of villages funded by the government, so as to unify the right of management with the right of management. This protection mode is a top-down protection action. In the selection and identification, the protection mainly targets the abundant, complete and high historical and cultural values of villages, which are listed as a list and then protected. The government will set up special protection and development for villages, and pay attention to protection and social benefits. This kind of protection mode has strong overall planning and good coordination. They can concentrate efforts and produce short term results, and all expenses are borne by the government. But in the process of protection, it is easy to cause unclear property rights and difficult to coordinate villagers’ interests. Due to the large government management institutions and low market sensitivity, the operation is often difficult to sustain. The protection of villages requires huge investment. Relying only on the government’s power, the funding pressure is large, and the village development is not sustainable.

**Enterprise-led:** Enterprise-led means that enterprises sign agreements with the government, and the government outsources the management rights of ancient villages to enterprises in the way of contracting. In general, enterprises contract the tourism resources of ancient villages, and enterprises invest in the planning and development, publicity and promotion, tourist organization and management of ancient villages. Villagers collect rent or get a share of the tourism tickets. The separation of management rights and ownership is more conducive to solving the problem of insufficient funds. The enterprise-led mode has significant advantages in terms of operation ability and management level, with fast development speed and obvious tourism results. At present, there is not a special regulation on the development and protection of ancient dwellings in China. Village development must be approved by the government departments even if

it is operated by enterprises. In the process of the development of ancient villages, an expert group must be formed by the government tourism and cultural relics administration departments to supervise and demonstrate the planning. When there are problems that cannot be solved in the development process, the expert group should be asked to analyze and solve them [3].

Village collective development: The village collective development and protection mode means that the residents of traditional villages and their village committees raise funds and develop independently, and unify the right of management with the right of ownership. Under this protection mode, villagers and village collectives develop and utilize villages as direct interest subjects, with self-financing, strong autonomy of villagers and fewer external conflicts. In addition, in this mode, the villagers have a high degree of participation, which can better relieve the pressure on local employment and is conducive to the sustainable development of villages. But on the other hand, in this mode, there is insufficient funds, slow development speed, non-professional operation and management, and low ability of tourism innovation and tourist source organization, which requires a strong village committee group. Without professional guidance, protection is easy to fall into mistakes and the effect is slow.

### **3. Problems Encountered in the Protection and Utilization of Traditional Villages**

Traditional villages are the treasures of our traditional culture. Under the impact of the modernization wave, how to rationally protect and develop these precious cultural heritages has become an urgent problem.

From May to June 2021, the author carried out field research for more than a month in Ganbao Tibetan Village, Taoping Qiang Village, Danba County, Ganzi Prefecture, Meigu County, Liangshan Prefecture and other places along the Tibetan-Qiang Yi Corridor. Combined with the research results, the author analyzed some common problems encountered in the protection and utilization of traditional villages along the Tibetan-Qiang Yi Corridor.

#### **3.1. Village Hollowing Out**

Marx believed that man is the most fundamental productive force. Population outflow has a profound impact on villages, and the lack of manpower seriously affects the scale and efficiency of agricultural production. Arable land is idled and abandoned, and the level of farming technology and food reserves declines, which to some extent reduces the productive income of land. Population outflow brings about the loss of history and culture on a deeper level. The imbalance of urban and rural education directly encourages rural children to choose schools in cities, and inevitably drives related families to get jobs in cities, thus breaking the link of village cultural inheritance. As a result of the merging of natural villages into administrative villages, the merging of rural schools indirectly drains the cultural history of natural villages. Village governance after population loss

has become a catalyst for hollowing out, outflow of young people with knowledge, and the future of village governance is worrying. As time goes by, village merger and disappearance are inevitable.

### **3.2. Slow Development of Agricultural Industry**

Productive forces include the means of production, the means of production and the persons who use them to transform the means of production. Backward means of production and the low skills of farmers engaged in agricultural work have a direct impact on the utilization of the means of production. The physical characteristics of the means of production also limit the use of advanced means of production. However, most traditional villages are located in mountain depressions. Objective conditions such as scattered land, poor soil, backward farming tools and water shortage slow the growth of agricultural production. On the one hand, the needs of village residents to improve their lives are growing; on the other hand, the agricultural industry and the output value of land cannot meet this demand, resulting in population outflow. The contradiction between productive forces and production relations makes traditional villages in an unprecedented predicament.

### **3.3. Simple Mode of Protection and Utilization**

Traditional villages are concentrated areas of human history and farming civilization, and the loss caused by improper protection can not be underestimated. From the current point of view, the protection of traditional villages across the country has embarked on the road of unitary development and tourism. The orientation of tourism makes the results of village protection completely opposite: the tourism that respects the history and culture and protects the farming civilization continues the traditional production and living habits of villages, which has both the form of traditional villages and the historical connotation of traditional villages. The development and protection based on the view that history and culture are only gimmicks of village tourism rather than the foundation of tourism is a simple and rough protection of history and culture, with poor long-term effect. This is also an important reason why rural tourism is built at high prices, but no one wants to buy it and the buildings are empty.

### **3.4. Difficulties in the Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Villages**

The rescue protection of traditional villages is the most urgent task at present. However, compared with ordinary villages, the repair and maintenance of traditional villages are extremely difficult. The main performance is as follows: First, the construction materials of villages are difficult to find and the original ingredients are difficult to restore. Second, the difference of funds allocated by the state or province (municipality) is in place or slow, which makes the original difficult restoration even more difficult. Third, due to poor natural conditions in

villages, villagers have strong relocation efforts, and lack of enthusiasm and participation in protection and renovation. Fourth, the development of village industry is difficult, and the homogenization phenomenon is serious. Fifth, local governments do not pay enough attention to the protection of traditional villages, focusing on industries and projects in rural areas, and ignoring the urgency of the protection of traditional villages to a certain extent.

In the process of building a new countryside, there are also many inappropriate practices. For example, in terms of land use policy, the homestead of old houses has been delayed or cannot be demolished, and the foundation of new houses cannot be approved. In addition, there is no overall plan for “demolishing old houses and building new ones”, and many villagers arbitrarily “demolish old houses and build new ones” in order to improve their living conditions, resulting in “independent and self-built destruction” of ancient villages. In some places, the construction of the new countryside is misinterpreted as large-scale demolition and construction. In the name of coordinating urban and rural development and coordinating land resources, large-scale village withdrawal and relocation activities are carried out [4]. The phenomenon of whole village relocation and merger or even the whole village knocking down and rebuilding is endless. The cultural resources of many traditional villages have been severely damaged or even disappeared.

### **3.5. Multiple Contradictions between the Wishes of Villagers and the Protection of Traditional Villages**

With the development of society and the improvement of people’s living standards, the contradiction between the traditional buildings with the age, backward facilities and unreasonable pattern and the villagers’ desire to improve their living conditions is becoming increasingly prominent. Coupled with the lack of funds and technologies required by the villagers for the repair of traditional buildings, it is very difficult to protect traditional buildings if the government does not fully supervise them. Generally, villagers will not use their only funds for the repair of traditional buildings, but are more willing to build modern houses with concrete structures. Even if the villagers are willing to repair the traditional buildings, due to the limitations of capital and technology, this kind of repair is often a kind of non-professional, in fact, it is the destruction of the traditional buildings.

### **3.6. Causes Analysis of Protection Problems in Traditional Villages**

- The existing protection and development plans for traditional villages are only empty shells of ancient villages, lacking living heritage-rural cultural landscape planning, and not sufficiently grounded. The existing scheme, which covers many aspects such as village protection, industrial development, landscape greening, supporting facilities and tourism planning, looks more like a rural city than a cultural village. In the process of urbanization

construction, emphasis should be placed on improving the cultural connotation. Traditional villages should be rationally utilized, developed and protected according to the actual situation of the region. For example, traditional villages with a long history and culture can be made into ancient villages by protection planning, while traditional villages with a well-preserved ecological environment can be made into tourist villages by protection planning. On the one hand, it can protect the village, and on the other hand, it can promote the local economic development.

- Some traditional villages that have been idle for many years and hollowed out hinder their own protection and development. The “hollowing out” of traditional villages is the main manifestation of the young and strong population flowing to cities, the decline of ancient buildings and the disappearance of village culture [5]. As the actual needs of village people are not combined with the protection and development of villages, and the historical and cultural values of villages are not fully explored, disseminated and realized, the villagers go out one after another, and no villagers return to the villages, so the task of village protection and development is heavier. Villagers are the carriers of village culture, the implementers and actors of village cultural landscape. The lack of villagers’ participation will inevitably lose the authenticity and ecology.
- Traditional intangible cultural heritage is facing the crisis of being lost due to lack of successors. The so-called intangible cultural heritage refers to the traditional cultural items of knowledge, technology and skills that have been created by human beings in history and passed down to the present in a living form and have important historical value, artistic value, cultural value, scientific value and social value, which are enough to represent a culture and are recognized by the local society. In the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage formulated and adopted by UNESCO in 2003, the “protection” of intangible cultural heritage is clearly defined as follows: “Protection refers to measures to ensure the vitality of intangible cultural heritage, including the recognition, documentation, research, preservation, protection, publicity, promotion, inheritance (especially through formal and informal education) and revitalization of all aspects of such heritage. There are many intangible cultural heritage projects in Henan Province. Henan Province attaches great importance to the “living inheritance” of intangible cultural heritage. In 2006, the “Opinions on the Implementation of the Application and Evaluation of Henan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage” was published. At present, four batches of the provincial intangible cultural heritage list have been published, and three more batches of the expanded list.
- Some intangible cultural heritages of performance are on the verge of being lost due to older inheritors and poor economic benefits. On the other hand, in the new media environment, the entertainment is more and more rich and



diversified, which makes the audience of traditional intangible cultural heritage less and less. Therefore, in addition to the Spring Festival and theme activities, we can rarely see the intangible cultural heritage in ordinary times, let alone appreciate the rural customs and folk customs contained in the intangible cultural heritage of villages. Traditional village culture is on the verge of extinction, and the intangible cultural landscape is gradually declining.

#### **4. Suggestions on the Overall Protection and Utilization of Traditional Villages**

At present, China's traditional villages are faced with multiple opportunities and challenges such as urbanization, the accelerated integration of urban and rural development, and the construction of beautiful villages. If the protection cannot be strengthened in time, these distinctive traditional village buildings may face the risk of demolition, rectification, or even withdrawal. In this context, this paper believes that the protection and utilization of traditional villages should be done in the following aspects:

##### **4.1. Improve Laws and Regulations, So that the Protection of Traditional Villages Can Be Based on Laws**

First, we should do a good job in supporting legislation for the protection of traditional villages, and on the basis of legislation, we should strictly implement the requirements of laws and regulations. Local governments at all levels should organize village surveys, determine different levels of traditional villages, implement corresponding protection and development measures, establish perfect targeted protection programs, earnestly abide by the policy of "effective protection, rational utilization, appropriate development and scientific management", and strengthen the protection principle of "historical authenticity, integrity of landscape and continuity of life". China has improved the land replacement policy, strengthened the supervision and protection of land used by traditional villages, and supported and helped villagers to improve their living conditions based on actual conditions. It should increase financial support for protection and development by strengthening policy support, supporting villagers to replace or lease their land or house property rights, and encouraging the participation of private capital. Based on local characteristics and resource endowments, the protection objectives should be clearly defined, the schemes should be rationally planned and implemented gradually, so as to achieve effective protection.

##### **4.2. Raise Awareness and Cultivate Conscious Protection Awareness**

Although the government's protection of traditional villages is getting deeper and deeper, villages still fail to realize the living inheritance. The key factor lies in people's understanding, including villagers who are the subjects of traditional village protection, governments and investors who lead the development of tra-

ditional villages, and every individual who pays attention to and participates in the protection and development of traditional villages. Only when villagers have a conscious awareness of protection, realize the value of traditional old homes, relics and traditional customs, and realize their own subjectivity, will they take the initiative to take the role of protection. With the strengthening of conscious protection consciousness of the government and investors, the concept that tourism development is equal to village protection will be abandoned in the process of protection and development of traditional villages, and the neglect of agricultural culture and agricultural production and life style will be abandoned in the process of development.

In order to truly combine protection and development. With the improvement of the conscious protection consciousness of every person who pays attention to traditional villages, the whole society will form a good atmosphere conducive to the protection of traditional villages [6]. At the same time, those practices that violate the principles of traditional village protection and one-sided pursuit of economic value will have no escape. Only by truly letting people realize the value of traditional villages can they really cultivate their conscious protection consciousness. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the cultural quality education and moral training of the people, and actively formulate and publicize laws and regulations to improve people's understanding of the value of traditional villages.

#### **4.3. The Government Should Adhere to Cultural Consciousness and Deepen the Research on Cultural Resources**

The protection and development of traditional villages cannot be separated from the cooperation of governments at all levels and their protection and renovation personnel. Governments at all levels should adhere to the guiding role of culture consciously, build a sound protection norm and strategy mechanism, comprehensively organize and identify the development context and corresponding value of traditional villages, and all departments should perform their respective duties to strengthen the practical transformation and application research of the resources related to traditional villages [7]. To explore new ways for the inheritance and development of traditional villages, build an effective communication platform, provide intellectual support for the protection and development of traditional villages, and promote the transformation of academic achievements into practical values.

#### **4.4. Combination of Multi-Directional Protection**

The protection of traditional villages should be combined with the development of local natural environment, tourism and culture to promote each other. While protecting the cultural resources of traditional villages, reasonable planning and development projects should be carried out to rid traditional villages of poverty. While reshaping the village pattern and improving the environment, we should

also strengthen the construction of supporting services to improve the production and living conditions of villagers. While safeguarding the economic interests and cultural rights and interests of villagers, it is also necessary to make good use of traditional resources to develop tourism, tourism agriculture, cultural and creative industries and other industrial projects suitable for the protection and development of traditional villages, so as to truly embark on the road of “protection, promotion and utilization, utilization and enhancement of protection”.

#### **4.5. Building a Team of Village Protection Talents**

The protection of traditional villages is a systematic project, which requires a variety of related professionals, and more importantly, the support of village craftsmen and residents [8]. A team of professionals and “local experts” should be set up together to make joint efforts in village construction and road repair, infrastructure improvement, historic site protection, written records and other work. The talent team needs to be the “leader goose” who dares to take responsibility for the work, the village talents with strong motivation, strong sense of responsibility and mission should take the lead, or the talented people who go out to make a living should be encouraged to return to their hometown and start their own business, and the policy and manpower support should be given.

#### **4.6. Seize Characteristics and Activate Advantageous Resources into Assets**

The advantage of traditional villages lies in their characteristics. To develop villages, we must build on their advantages and improve their weaknesses. Neither agricultural industry nor tourism industry can destroy the cultural core of traditional villages, and gather together agricultural civilization, family traditions, ancestral halls, temple fairs and other cultural carriers of production and life, so as to achieve sustainable development of characteristic industries, increase the stable income of village residents, gradually reduce the outflow of young and strong labor force in villages, and make villages become the homes of villagers and static exhibits.

#### **4.7. Strengthen the Rural Organization to Unite the Productive Forces**

The strength of rural grass-roots organizations has a direct bearing on village development and affects residents’ enthusiasm for production [9]. We should strengthen rural grassroots organizations, improve unity within the organizations and between the organizations and the residents, offer suggestions and suggestions for residents’ income and prosperity and village protection and utilization, and promote the implementation of industrial projects, the placement of relevant supporting service facilities, the training of staff knowledge and ability, and financial subsidies in a planned and systematic way in a spirit of solid

work.

## 5. Summary

The research on traditional villages in Chinese academic circles started late, and the research content mainly focuses on the formation and evolution of traditional villages, protection and tourism development, and there are few researches in the fields of law, policy and system. The research disciplines mainly focus on urban planning, tourism management and construction technology, and there are few comprehensive studies across disciplines. The research objects are mainly those traditional villages with rich and high value cultural relics and well-preserved village patterns. That is to say, there are more researches on the “listed” traditional villages, but fewer researches on the “unlisted” traditional villages. In view of the large number, forms and different situations of traditional villages in China, future research should not only focus on the origin, development, characteristics, value, protection, development and utilization of traditional villages from the perspective of the whole, but also need to conduct in-depth analysis of relevant issues from the perspective of individual cases. At the same time, multidisciplinary research will become the mainstream of future research. Those traditional villages that are greatly affected by urbanization should be paid more attention.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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