Joint participation: Protection and development of ancient villages

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ABSTRACT

Under the background of modernization, the continuation and development of historical and artistic values of ancient villages are faced with many difficulties, and corresponding theories are needed to guide practice. Taking Baojing Village in China as an example, this paper studies and expounds on the strategies for the protection and development of ancient villages, establishes a coordination mechanism for all parties and provides experience for the difficulties faced by this field. In the past, most Chinese ancient village literature studies focused on the characteristic value, formation, and evolution of historical and cultural villages. However, the research on the integration and utilization of resources in historical and cultural villages still needs to be further deepened.

KEYWORDS

ancient villages, development, culture preservation, heritage

1. PREFACE

The traditional village is the most important spatial organizational unit of traditional society and is a non-renewable heritage created by history. The long history and vast territory have formed ancient villages with different temperaments. These ancient villages not only have an emotional and physical dimension but also carry different folklore and historical culture. People gradually become more deeply aware of the special historical, artistic, and scientific value of traditional architecture itself and the profound cultural heritage it contains. In the ancient villages, you can always notice the impact of modern life on tradition, which is changing the lives of the ancient villages in a subtle way.

Not to be optimistic, in the context of modernization, a large number of ancient villages left behind by history are experiencing the crisis of withering away. In the process of rapid urbanization, the survival and development of Chinese ancient villages are facing many difficulties and are being damaged to different degrees with the economic development and the impact of modernization and urbanization [1]. Modernity is gradually replacing tradition, and tradition is gradually disappearing. The protection of ancient villages is in progress, and there is an urgent need for corresponding theoretical construction to guide the practice. For abstract culture and folklore, certain measures should be taken to protect the original culture and the interests of community residents to make it sustainable. How to take into account tourism development on the basis of preserving historical and cultural heritage, the development of ancient villages is faced with the choice of protecting better development, protecting with scientific methods, and dealing with the relationship between new buildings and existing buildings in terms of style, volume, and layout.
How to deal with the contradictory issues of protection and development of ancient villages, participate in social processes, and consider the two issues of development and protection together. The development of rural tourism is of great significance to the revitalization and renewal of traditional villages, and multi-disciplinary participation has been initially formed, but further depth is needed in the census and identification of resources and cross-disciplinary aspects of historical and cultural villages and towns. The key to solving this problem lies in fully understanding and maximizing the protection of the historical culture, local characteristics, and ecological environment of traditional villages in the planning process. This paper attempts to explore the methods, strategies, and implementation approaches for the conservation and utilization of ancient villages in the context of Baojing Village in Hunan Province, providing empirical references for the current conservation and development of ancient villages, with a view to playing a useful role in promoting the conservation of traditional villages in China.

2. CONSERVATION OF BAOJING ANCIENT VILLAGE

Baojing Village was first built in the Shunzhi period of the Qing Dynasty (AD 1650). It is a well-preserved traditional village with extremely high cultural value. The village is located in a hilly area with abundant sunshine and rainfall throughout the year. The village buildings are large in scale, located on a slope that is not suitable for farming, with green mountains behind and rivers in front, which are in harmony with the natural environment. Most of the building materials come from locally fired grey bricks, green tiles, and wood, forming a unified architectural style with the white walls. The villagers are mainly engaged in the agricultural economy. With the development of modernization, the function of ancient houses can no longer meet the needs of modern people. Some residents are also aware of the protection of ancient buildings. After moving out, they built a new house not far from the old one. The use of new materials for instance ceramic tiles and marble makes the new house incompatible with the old house, breaking the original and natural harmony and unity of the atmosphere. The villagers’ opinions were summarized and sorted out through visits and interviews, and the above six categories were formed, which need to be deployed by the local government according to the actual situation of each household.

2.1. Protection of the overall environment of the ancient village - building a new village again

The protection of the entire ancient village needs to be planned from both macro and micro perspectives, with unified guiding principles and individual pertinence. As a cultural value, the structure and function of the houses of the past hundred years are very different from the needs of modern people, and it is difficult to match the production and lifestyle of modern people from the perspective of use. And it carries traces of people’s historical life, and also needs to exist as a memory, a spirit of place, and also as a valuable tourism resource for Baojing Village, which is its main development direction. Therefore, in order to ensure the modern production and lifestyle of people here without destroying the ancient village architecture and the environment itself, it is necessary to transfer part of the content that the ancient village needs to carry and to partially evacuate the traditional houses of Baojing Village for functional conservation. It is necessary for the local government to plan at a macro level, to set up an ancient village area mainly for developing tourism, and a residential area for carrying life. Dividing these two areas does not mean that everyone should be moved out of the ancient village area, but requires the local government to consider the actual situation and make a comprehensive plan by combining the situation of each household.

The ancient village district can sort out the situation and regulate it at the micro level. The first type of situation is residents who need to seek to expand their living space due to a carrying surplus of people growth. The second kind of residents are those who wish to change their living environment and seek living space in line with the modern lifestyle. The third type is to accept the residents who rent out the existing ancient houses, get a certain return, and can guarantee their own comfortable living conditions. The fourth is not to seek change, still maintain the existing way of life, and the resident population is not more than the carrying capacity of the house. The fifth type of residents are those whose population has exceeded the carrying capacity of the house, but still want to maintain their existing lifestyle and the house is in urgent need of renovation. The sixth kind is to know that the population has exceeded the carrying capacity of the ancient house, not far from the ancient house, a new “modern building” that is incompatible with the village-style has been built with modern commonly used building materials, broken the original and natural harmony and unity of the atmosphere. The villagers’ opinions were summarized and sorted out through visits and interviews, and the above six categories were formed, which need to be deployed by the local government according to the actual situation of each household and the residents’ personal wishes.

For the first, second, and third cases can be moved out of this part of the residents to the living area, according to their own personal wishes to operate the original ancient house, or rented by others to operate on their behalf, engaged in commercial activities that do not damage the ancient house itself. The fourth kind of residents can maintain their living status quo, but the government needs to set up a special department to regularly check the condition of the ancient house for the residents, whether it needs to be repaired, and provide professional repair guidance, this part of the residents also ensure the original life of the ancient village, but also to meet the feelings of tourists to the original ancient village living conditions. In the fifth case, the government needs to intervene and persuade the villagers to move out partially, so that the livelihood of this part of the residents can be secured in the living area and the residents who have a strong desire to maintain the status quo can continue the original way of life while relieving the pressure on the ancient houses. For the sixth case, it is necessary to renovate the new buildings that
destroy the local style and are incompatible with the original architectural style, unify the architectural style of the ancient village from the external architectural shape, and strengthen the regional architectural characteristics [2], (Table 1).

The newly built residential areas are also very favorable for the development prospect of the local government, but the site of the new village needs to meet several conditions, first, it should not be too far from the ancient village; second, the construction is not located and later life waste pollution cannot damage the local natural environment; third, convenient transportation. The government’s new village construction, while relieving the load-bearing pressure of the old village, can also attract investment for the new village, building hotels and businesses to accommodate tourists. This ensures the humanistic and natural environment of the ancient village and also provides the bearing space for the later development of tourism and business.

2.2. Maintenance of ancient buildings - repairing the old as the old

The ancient houses of Baojing Village are based on traditional Chinese culture, and the concept of “unity of heaven and man” is reflected in the architectural layout and decorative themes. The architecture of Baojing Village mainly comes from the Qing Dynasty, reflecting the cultural characteristics, lifestyle, building materials, and social system of that time. Most of the ancient houses in Baojing Village belong to the “patio” architectural layout (Fig. 1), i.e., the patio on the central axis is the center, and then various functional rooms

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Source: Authors

Fig. 1. Patio style building (Source: Zhao Lei)
are arranged around the patio. There are different ways of life in different historical periods, and emerging technologies affect people’s life. In order to meet the needs of people’s daily life today and the development of today’s society, it is necessary to consider how to resolve the conflict between the old space and the new technology that exists in it.

History is constantly changing and evolving, and today’s architecture will become part of history. The art of traditional architecture is gradually disappearing from people’s view, but the culture and history it contains represent each place’s cultural characteristics and implicitly influences the direction of local architectural style. The protection of ancient villages must face many problems like mode of production and economic development. During major historical transitions in industrial transformation and modern economic development, fundamental lifestyle changes occur. The traditional village is a dynamic, evolutionary, and developmental concept; there are two extremes in the way it is being handled now, either to keep it in its original state or to rebuild it. One of the best ways to resolve the contradiction between conservation and development is to preserve old villages by building new ones, rather than drastically demolishing and remodeling houses and villages in order to improve the quality of life; otherwise, the meaning of conservation will be completely lost.

The heritage and development of ancient architecture have always been a concern of today’s society. In the restoration of monuments, it is necessary to start from a holistic concept, grasp the laws of traditional architectural culture, start from the characteristics of the ancient buildings themselves, and combine them with the actual situation of the ancient buildings in Baojing Village [3]. The ancient architecture of Baojing Village follows the criteria of historical authenticity, living authenticity, and stylistic integrity, and adopts different ways of protection and renewal based on the preservation of architectural quality and style, which are preservation, protection, transformation, temporary stay, and renewal. Since ancient times, people have had the concept of tending to avoid harm. The psychology of Baojing Village residents praying for good fortune is concentrated in the decoration of the residence: doors, windows, mountain walls, shrines, and other parts have been treated artistically. Through psychological suggestion and other means to express their demands: farmers hope for smooth wind and water, students hope for success and fame, officials hope for promotion, and so on. The colorful patterns make the architecture of Baojing Village exude a strong local artistic style. These decorative patterns (Fig. 2) with regional characteristics have also become an important carrier of Baojing Village’s architectural art and folk culture.

Therefore, based on the above, the restoration of old houses is relatively specialized and requires the cooperation of multiple forces. Government departments need to strengthen residents’ awareness of the need to protect old houses and do a good job of propaganda to make villagers aware of the need to protect old houses, not only from the perspective of heritage conservation but also in relation to the future sustainable development of the local area and to the practical interests of individuals. Establish professional institutions for the restoration of ancient buildings and encourage villagers to actively cooperate in the mapping and archiving of existing ancient buildings. In the event that restoration is needed in the future, professionals will assist in restoring their appearance in order to prevent “modern” renovation by residents as they see fit. Under the guidance of the government, the protection of ancient dwellings with the participation of professionals and villagers has laid a foundation for the sustainable development of Baojing Village.

2.3. Environmental protection in Baojing Village - harmonious coexistence

Baojing ancient dwellings live by the mountains and by the water, not by overriding nature. It reflects the harmonious coexistence of architecture and the natural environment. It expresses the respect of the ancestors in southern Hunan for nature (Fig. 3). These ideas and attitudes, for the contemporary, do not consider the natural environment, trying to transform the natural, simple pursuit of economic indicators or architectural form of residential building design, has an essential inspiration. The protection of Baojing Village is the historical continuation and preservation of the human living environment, which needs to be combined with the local characteristics of Baojing in terms of the protection of the ancient village and the development of the new area, the natural environmental protection and historical preservation of the village, the protection of the ancient town style and the improvement of the human living environment, the development of cultural tourism and the development of the economy, etc.

Ecotourism is a combination of science and local characteristics, requiring the local government to have a deep
understanding of the characteristics of the ecosystem in the area where Baojing Village is located and knowledge of ecological conservation. Strictly speaking, participants in ecotourism need to have a high level of environmental awareness. Baojing Village, with its remote location and fragile ecosystem of its own, is a relatively popular tourist area, and most people who choose Baojing village as a tourist attraction are those with high consumption levels and strong environmental awareness. Nowadays, much so-called ecotourism, in addition to emphasizing ecotourism, understanding nature, and integrating into nature, neglect the protection of nature by ecotourism, which does not meet the essential requirements of ecotourism. It is necessary to improve the quality of tourists through the local government’s publicity and the formulation of corresponding norms to make them realize that heritage is a spiritual and material culture shared by all and that everyone is needed to contribute their own sense of responsibility to the preservation of the ancient village environment.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANCIENT VILLAGE OF BAOJING

3.1. The revitalization of culture - the creation of “business cards”

Ancient villages are carriers of Chinese farming culture, rich in ancient philosophical ideas in site layout and architectural features, with regional and national traditional cultural characteristics, and rich in historical and cultural artistic information in the form of architectural structures, traditional lifestyles, and cultural customs, and are important witnesses of local social development and cultural and artistic achievements. The traditional village is a witness of thousands of years of Chinese farming civilization and a carrier of traditional culture, which integrally reflects the geographical environment, regional culture, vernacular characteristics, and lifestyle of the area in which it is located, for instance the village layout, street pattern, building construction, village rules and regulations, dialects and sayings, etc. Each ethnic group and region has its own characteristics and customary techniques with high historical and cultural value.

There are four schools in the village, and as long as a clan member is willing to study, he or she will receive financial support from the clan; heavy prizes are given to those who are qualified to be selected. In the Qing Dynasty, there were more than 40 talents in Baojing Village, including 10 scholars and 4 senior licentiates; in the Qing Dynasty, there were 30 scholars in Jianghua County, and Baojing Village accounted for one-third of them. Among the ten scholars, there were eight scholars from the four generations of He Yuli’s family during the Daoguang period. This is due to the He family’s tradition of advocating and emphasizing education. Afterward, due to the lack of attention to culture and education, Baojing Village declined, with no past glory, but has remained a profound cultural heritage of traditional virtues, gradually transforming into the simple virtues of the people now.

The problem of declining traditional villages should be solved by formulating a strategy for creating and revitalizing traditional villages, mobilizing residents’ enthusiasm, revitalizing local culture, reshaping regional functions, and improving the quality of life. It is necessary to make villagers consciously aware of the preciousness of local resources and the scarcity of cultural assets so that they always have identification and self-confidence in their own village culture and actively participate in the common construction so that the roots and soul of traditional culture can be preserved. The study of cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence in traditional villages is the basic focus of the study on the protection and revitalization of traditional villages and is a key link to solving a series of traditional village problems.

For the excellent traditional culture of Baojing Village, it is necessary to set up appropriate exhibition “windows”, so that it can form its own “business card”. Turn the “business card” into a symbol for publicity to express the unique traditional culture. The local government can use the most well-preserved and complete old houses in the village as “museums” to showcase the culture of Baojing Village and scatter them in the village, with their functions playing a complementary role to each other. The heritage value of traditional villages is the core content and goal of the value-oriented theoretical framework of traditional village conservation. Its heritage value mainly includes historical and cultural value, aesthetic value, and social values. Domestic scholars not only point out the importance of traditional village conservation, but also propose the role of cultural genes and spatial nuclei in conservation; the role of enhancing the cultural capital of traditional villages in revitalization and renewal, and the value of developing rural tourism.

3.2. Inheritance and development of ancient villages - transformation of living and working areas

Developing and utilizing traditional villages scientifically and reasonably while protecting them has become a common problem in protecting traditional villages around the world. Based on the actual situation of local village situation, transform residential functions into commercial models. Transfer the local industry from the primary industry to the tertiary industry to increase the scale of the tertiary industry due to the local cultural and environmental advantages. To develop the regional ecotourism development plan and increase the development of artificial ecotourism. The ecotourism area is divided into areas and different projects are established, and each project is evaluated, and the projects that do not have an impact on the environment are carried out with less than bearable impact; in the process of development, the impact of Baojing Village is minimized as much as possible.

Prevent environmental pollution and deterioration of the natural and human environment caused by tourism activities in advance by improving infrastructure. Maintain the traditional atmosphere, control the density of tourists, and balance the carrying capacity. If the alleyways in Baojing Village are crowded with tourists, the quiet alleyways are lost.
and the damage to cultural relics is obvious, the carrying capacity of these attractions will be saturated, at which point it will be more difficult to talk about conservation and the attractiveness to tourists will be greatly weakened. With the development of rural tourism, more and more tourists go to traditional villages for sightseeing, which is also accompanied by adverse problems for instance, excessive commercialization of traditional villages and the destruction of the natural environment of the villages by tourists. This has put traditional villages in another dilemma in the process of conservation.

The local government must protect the agriculture and handicrafts of Baojing Village and selectively develop ecological services. For some industries with better economic interests, if they cause damage to environmental resources, this is also absolutely impossible to develop. Although the short-term economic benefits are low, it is beneficial to the development of Baojing Village, which can promote the ecological diversity of the landscape and enhance the local idyllic characteristics of Baojing Village, for instance, primary agricultural ecology, which can attract more tourists in the long run. These related industries need to be focused on by the local government as the main line of development.

On the social level, rebuilding rural society and restoring the popularity and vitality of villages is a common problem faced by post-industrialized societies. To protect traditional villages, it is necessary to let them develop first, but also to learn from the progress of social civilization and to protect the rights and interests of the original residents for their own development. Therefore, the characteristics of traditional villages in terms of population, land, industry, ecological environment, and social environment should be analyzed in terms of living space, location selection, spatial pattern, population change, and industrial adjustment. Theories of anthropology, sociology, ecology, and economics help to grasp the development and evolution of traditional villages in a comprehensive and systematic way. These multi-faceted studies contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of traditional villages.

4. CONCLUSION

Conservation and development are mutually reinforcing; the intersection of conservation and development initiatives is often a source for finding problem-solving strategies. Comprehensive planning of local tourism resources and residents’ wishes is needed to propose development strategies adapted to the local area. Building new villages in places with suitable conditions not only ensures the ecological environment of Baojing Village but also improves the carrying capacity for tourism development and commerce. In the restoration process of ancient houses, professional guidance is needed in order to continue the ancient style and style with high quality. This process requires local governments, residents, and ancient building restoration professionals to cooperate with each other, establish a positive interaction mechanism, take local spiritual and material culture as the core of sustainable development resources, and form a cultural foundation for sustainable development from within.

For the external natural environment, establish a series of policies and regulations to protect the local natural environment. The development should be carried out without damaging the ecological resources. At the same time, local government should make rational use of ecological resources, attach importance to the original ecological characteristics, improve the competitiveness of the tourism market, give play to the comprehensive economic benefits, and achieve the strategic policy of sustainable development of local tourism in Baojing Village.

The internal cultural environment of Baojing Village is organically combined with the external natural environment. Baojing Village fully demonstrates its unique appearance and outlines an overall “card” for visitors. People usually understand abstract culture through recognizable symbols. In rural construction with tourism as the main industry, it is a common way to use symbols to express the traditional culture or unique tourism culture. The symbols representing the unique regional culture of Baojing Village are promoted to increase local popularity and attract more visitors. At the same time, it is also necessary to ensure the daily life of villagers, gradually change the original basic way of life in the ancient village, accept a mode of tourism open to the outside world, and provide a good human foundation for the normal operation of the village.

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