Investigation and Analysis of Villagers Participation in Protection of Traditional Villages—Case study in Shaxi

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Abstract. This paper takes Shaxi Town, Jianchuan County as typical case, exploring villager participation in traditional village protection in Yunnan Province, by interviews and questionnaires on-site. The results show that the villagers are playing a role in the village protection, but only relying on the influence of traditional culture and its simple cognition, the engagement is not high. At the end of this paper, two suggestions to improve the villagers' participation in village protection will be given.

Introduction

Traditional villages mainly refer to villages with historical, cultural and social resources and formed earlier. The cultures retained in traditional villages are basically representative traditional cultural heritages, which condense the local culture, customs and religions created by the villagers, thought to be China's precious natural resource heritage and historical and cultural heritage, which should be protected. Since the 1980s, China has begun to protect historical and cultural villages and towns. In 2002, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics issued by the People's Republic of China enacted legislation on the protection of historical and cultural blocks and villages. After more than 30 years of development, the protection of China's history and culture villages and towns has achieved certain results, but with the advancement of human cognition, the protection of villages and towns has certain limitations, mostly for the protection of architectural entities, while the concern for intangible cultural heritage is relatively weak, ignoring the importance of human and cultural factors. According to the data, from 2002 to 2014, due to the rapid development of urbanization, the number of natural villages in China decreased from 3.63 million to 2.52 million. A study by the China Village Culture Research Center of Hunan University found that traditional villages in China disappeared at a rate of 1.6 per day, and the rate of decline in traditional villages was distressing.

The Importance of Villagers' Participation in Village Protection

As the owner of the village, the villagers have the right to advocate the protection and development of the village. The village is first and foremost to be the production and living space of the villagers. The villagers are the builders of the villages and the producers, inheritors and users of the village culture, and thus the most direct stakeholders of the protection action. As for whether the village is to be included in the national policy protection actions, as well as how to choose the path of village Development and Protection and distribute benefit, the villagers should have the highest engagement and full voice. Traditional village protection without their participation is neither sympathetic nor reasonable.

Villagers are the main body to realize the protecting. Cultural heritage protection is one of the main scopes of traditional village protection. This means not only protecting the traditional village itself, layout, style, and overall spatial form and environment of the village, but also protecting the cultural
relics, historical building and traditional residence, such as ancient roads and bridges, ancient wells and trees, and also protect intangible cultural heritage and related objects and places. As is known to all, villagers are carriers of intangible cultural heritage. If villagers do not participate in conservation actions, intangible cultural heritage will die out due to the lack of carriers. Equally important, traditional village protection actions must not only protect cultural heritage, but also make rational use of cultural heritage, establish protection and management mechanisms, and improve the infrastructure and public environment of traditional villages. Without the participation, cooperation and support of villagers, it is difficult to carry out smoothly and orderly, and it is even less likely to achieve real success.

**Study Research Design**

In order to study the extent and effect of villagers' participation in traditional village protection in Yunnan Province, this paper chooses Shaxi, a famous traditional village in Yunnan Province as research object, and interviews and surveys were conducted among villagers.

**Shaxi Introduction**

The total area of Shaxi is 287 square kilometers. In 2014, it was included in the list of the traditional Chinese villages supported by the Ministry of Finance. It is a gathering place for ethnic minorities (the Bai nationality population accounts for 87% of the total population) and the Han, Yi and Dai ethnic groups. It is an important station on the ancient tea-horse road. It connects Tibet and East Asia, and trades are very developed during the heyday. The caravan brought different cultures and religions. It merged in Shaxi Town and formed a multiple religious belief system with unique regional characteristics and national characteristics. The festival activities among different ethnic groups also influenced and absorbed each other. With the repair of the highway, the ancient road horse trade business activity has gradually declined. Due to its special geographical location, the connection between Shaxi and the outside world is relatively lagging, which makes the human history of Shaxi Ancient Town collide with generations, and the folk culture inherits well. The existing ancient town pattern can still responding to the millennium appearance of the ancient town, until today, the central area penetrated by the ancient ramp is still the main place for residents' lives.

**Investigation of Villagers**

The investigation of the villagers mainly focused on the attitude of village protection and the degree of participation in the protection of the village. Considering the convenience of the villagers to fill out the questionnaire, only 8 questions were set in this questionnaire. The answer to the question is simply to check “Yes” Or “No”, 50 questionnaires were distributed in this survey, and 48 valid questionnaires were collected. The 48 respondents were all local villagers in Sideng Village, including 20 males and 24 females. The ages were mainly between 20 and 60 years old. The specific age distribution is shown in Figure 1. The results of the questionnaire survey are shown in Table 1.

![Figure 1. Age Distribution of Investigated Villagers.](image-url)
Table 1. The results of questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes counts</th>
<th>Yes percentage</th>
<th>No counts</th>
<th>No percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attitude for village protection</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree to develop village tourism</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participate Folk-Custom Activity</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mending own old house</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Involved in Renovation of cultural relics</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Involved in building and maintaining common facilities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Involved in intendancy of village protection</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Planning to leave village to have a job</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from Table 1 and interviews that most villagers know protecting villages and developing tourism is important to promote the development of local economy. However, due to the limitation of cultural level, they do not understand the meaning and connotation of protection, so they will not be actively involved in issues related to village protection. More than 80% of the ethnic groups in Shaxi Town and its surrounding areas are Bai nationality. Due to the restriction of traffic, geographical location and national characteristics, they are less affected by foreign nationalities and localization. Nearly 94% of the villagers said that they will be willing to repairing the old house and maintaining the external features of the original building to the extent that the economy allows; more than 83% of the respondents expressed their willingness to participate in traditional folk activities (such as "Torch Festival", "Prince Club", "Main Festival" and "Shibaoshan" concert"). In the usual communication, the main language of communication for villagers is Bai language, and the middle-aged and elderly people still wear traditional Bai costumes, but the survey found that for local people under the age of 30, they are influenced by the network and foreign things. Although they can still say "white words", most people no longer wear traditional folk costumes "often".

Due to the long-term disrepair of the traditional architecture of Shaxi Ancient Town, it was on the verge of disappearing. In 2002, the local county government cooperated with the Swiss Foundation to repair the main building of Si Deng Street. This restoration has largely restored the original appearance of Si Deng Street. According to an engineer who has been involved in the restoration, "The skills of the Bai carpenters are excellent and they are employed in the repair work of related ancient buildings throughout the country." Therefore, a large number of local villagers were hired during the restoration process. The results of this survey also showed 46% of the villagers participated in the local cultural relics and ancient building repairs. However, in the construction and management of public facilities, only 23% of the respondents participated, and only 6% participated in the supervision and rectification of the village. According to the communication between the author and the respondents, most of the villager’s attitudes towards the management of public facilities and the supervision and rectification of village protection should be mainly done by the government is negative; on the other hand, they think that they only want to live their own life well and don't want to "get things up".

On the question of "whether to leave the village to go out to work," nearly half of the villagers, especially the villagers under the age of 40, have the willingness to leave. The reason is that on the one hand, they are influenced those who improved their lives and increased their knowledge by going out to work. On the other hand, with the development of Shaxi tourism, local villagers are greatly affected by foreign “businessmen”: foreigners are earning money, and local people are mainly benefiting from those who have old houses on the street and rented out to them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the investigation and interview results of the villagers in Sideng Village of Shaxi Town, it can be seen that the villagers played a role in the protection of the village, but only relying on the influence of traditional culture and their simple cognition, the participation was not high. The main reason is that the local government lacks effective publicity, training and communication to the
villagers, which leads to the lack of ways for the villagers to participate in the decision-making and management of public affairs in the village. It is recommended that the local government should fully communicate and cooperate with the local villagers to establish village public facilities and villages. Supervise the rectification and protection team, formulate corresponding operational protection plans for the residents' lives in the village, improve the villagers' protection awareness from the overall layout of the protection of villages and towns, and use the wood carving skills of the villagers to cultivate the villagers to form local restoration personnel, responsible for the daily protection of the building, the joint management of public facilities and the full supervision of the villagers' general supervision of the protection and rectification work, and the maximum reconstruction of the humanities information and cultural traditions of the ancient tea-horse road.

Secondly, as the villagers are attracted by the city, there will be fewer and fewer stays in the village. In the long run, the village protection and development will soon have a human fault and cannot guarantee the sustainable development of the village. The government should attach importance on the integration of traditional cultural industries with the market economy, inject new vitality into the economic development of traditional villages, and generate income for local farmers. The process of excavating and developing the characteristic culture and economy, while increasing income, is also a process for the villagers to understand the culture and resources they own. It can also enhance the sense of pride and happiness of the villagers and enhance the self-confidence of the traditional cultural community.

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References