

The Protection and Inheritance of the Village Culture with Chinese Minorities' Characteristics From the Perspective of Cultural Ecology*

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Abstract—From the perspective of cultural ecology, this study considers ethnic villages to be a carrier of outstanding national culture, and ethnic village culture is a characteristic resource for developing cultural industries in ethnic minority areas. It is also mentioned that the tangible and intangible cultures of ethnic villages should be integrated into the entire cultural ecosystem to achieve unity, integrity, authenticity protection, and lively transmission.

Keywords: *ethnic minorities, characteristic villages, culture*

I. INTRODUCTION

China's ethnic minority areas have formed many different characteristic villages in the long historical changes. The characteristic villages and their surroundings constitute a complete ethnic cultural ecology, carrying cultural information of different regions and different ethnic groups, and forming valuable cultural resources. During the industrial revolution in full swing in China, with the development of industrialization and urbanization, some ethnic villages suffered deplorable damage: in some villages, the ancient style and ancient appearance disappeared in the "reformation of old villages"; in the development of tourism, some villages were over-exploited, creating scenic spots and cultural deterioration, of which the damage caused by natural damage and poor protection was even more serious. How to create a national cultural ecological environment that is conducive to the healthy and sustainable development of ethnic minority villages, and to effectively inherit and protect its original ecological characteristics and its cultural space has become a major practical issue that governments at all levels, academia and residents in the village care about and urgently need to solve.

II. THE CONCEPT OF HOLISTIC PROTECTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Cultural ecology and ethnoecology agree that people should uphold the holism, always treat different levels of research objects as a unified whole, and pay attention to their overall ecological characteristics. [1] That is to say, all

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tangible and intangible materials and cultures in this ecology are organic components of the overall ecology, of which the problems of ethnic minority villages should be examined comprehensively and systematically from the relationship between the system and the external environment, as well as the whole and parts.

A. Maintaining the unity of characteristic villages

The value of the culture of ethnic minority villages is only reflected in the visible architecture and its ancillary heritage, while the deep cultural meaning lies in the religious beliefs, values, customs, and lifestyles of the village residents. The two are unified in a complete ecosystem. Therefore, to protect or build characteristic villages, it is necessary to not only focus on the protection of ancient buildings, but also pay attention to the villagers' living patterns, working methods, traditional religious beliefs, and so on. If not, the characteristic villages "may become buildings 'specimens' without cultural souls" [2]. Therefore, only by tangibly protecting intangible material culture, intangible production and lifestyle, customs and other intangible culture, can they truly retain the overall ecology of the characteristic villages and realize the unification of national ecology.

B. Protecting the integrity of characteristic villages

As an important part of the village's cultural ecology, the tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage are the characteristics of the village's ecological civilization, which reflects the village's unique cultural temperament. Therefore, the establishment of an ecological museum is an important means of overall protection, but the practice of moving city museums to villages and setting up only data centers (museums) cannot be adopted mechanically, nor can they be just experts and scholars without the participation of locals. In addition, in the process of rural tourism construction, one-sided pursuit of economic benefits should not distort traditional ethnic customs and make vulgar entertainment activities, but should preserve its integrity with local folklore ecology. Therefore, the construction of a national ecological museum to protect characteristic villages

should not be separated from the ecological environment of the national characteristic village culture, nor from the soil it generates, and coordinated with the local new rural construction policy, relying on local residents to carry on their own initiative. This is also in line with the ecological systemic view, that is, when treating the tangible and intangible cultures in ethnic minority villages, it is a necessity to follow the dialectical relationship between the whole and the elements (parts), and pay attention to protecting the integrity of the village cultures.

C. Protecting the authenticity of characteristic villages

Cultural ecology shows that the traditional village space itself is a complete ecosystem, natural system, cultural system, and social system that interact with each other. Among them, the most precious in the cultural system is the realness of the cultural spirit. According to this, the "authenticity" of ethnic minority village cultures points to the realness and naturalness of the ethnic cultural spirit. According to surveys, in the development and utilization of tourism products that take ethnic festival culture as a resource, the authenticity of ethnic culture is often damaged to varying degrees. For this reason, the establishment of a "cultural ecological protection village" is an effective way to protect the authenticity of the characteristics of the village culture. Since the "11th Five-Year Plan", the establishment of cultural protection zones has been included in the outline of national development planning. The establishment and exploration of South Fujian Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Area, Qinghai Regong Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Area, Qiang Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Area, Diqing Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Area have taken the lead [3], providing a reference for the protection of other ethnic minority village cultures. In addition, while protecting villages with national characteristics, it is necessary to actively absorb the achievements of civilization in the era of industrialization and informationization. The combination of traditional culture and modern civilization is the key to effectively inherit the village cultures. In the researchers' opinion, in the process of retaining tradition, it is unrealistic and unscientific to place too much emphasis on "original ecology", and it is also an extreme approach. Villagers in economically underdeveloped areas should be exposed to modern civilization, and pay more attention to economic development to eradicate poverty. The starting point and end point of establishing a national cultural ecological village is not to set restrictions, keep the village appearance as it was, and completely retain the authenticity, but try to maintain the authenticity of the village culture on the basis of economic development.

For example, the characteristic villages named Banyueli of the She nationality have pleasant natural ecological resources: Yutu Mountain is in the east of the village; the village leans against the foot of the Miele Mountain, which is shaped like a crescent moon, and faces the Shuangfuqiao Reservoir in the south. The building resources are also remarkable: a large-scale building complex of the Qing Dynasty has been left, among which there are three ancient

dwelling (the oldest mansion of Lei Shiru, a Juren (a martial provincial graduate) in the Qing Dynasty, is the largest), Lei's Ancestral Hall and Longxi Palace. The entire building complex covers more than 2,000 square meters. At the same time, the traditional production tools, living utensils, and handicrafts of the She people, as well as the creation arts worshipped by totems such as ancestral figures, phoenix crowns, (see "Fig. 1") and gods' memorial tablets, etc., have also been collected and displayed by people who have interests, which played a certain protective role. However, they are all out of the realm. If people want to further develop the cultural value of the villages with the characteristics of the She people, in addition to the tangible culture mentioned above, the protection of the intangible culture created by the She people that continue to this day should also be paid attention to. The protection status in Banyueli is a typical one, which exists in other characteristic villages to varying degrees.



Fig. 1. Phoenix crown displayed in the private collection of Banyueli Village, Xiapu, Fujian.

The typical method for unified and integrated protection is to establish an ecological museum. In this respect, the exploration and experience of the Guizhou Suoga Miao Ecological Museum have certain value of reference. But the positive significance of the eco-museum cannot be overstated, because even in Suga, since the establishment of the eco-museum, the disintegration and fragmentation of the local Miao traditional culture is amazing [4]. The essence of the problem is that protection is closely related to inheritance (see the details below). If national traditional culture cannot be upgraded to cultural resources and incubate related cultural industries and tourism, etc. The so-called unity, integrity and authenticity protection are just the wishful thinking of the government, experts and scholars, because the residents of the ethnic villages have not benefited and generated motivation.

III. THE VIEW OF LIVING INHERITANCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL ECOLOGY

According to cultural ecology, the special historical, geographical, natural, and economic methods of each ethnic group formed a unique cultural ecology, which gave birth to characteristic village culture. The characteristic village culture, especially the intangible culture, and the cultural habitat on which it depends are an ecologically balanced relationship. Therefore, it inherently requires a "living"

heritage. It is believed that "intangible cultural heritage" is an important part of the characteristic village culture, and the focus of lively inheritance should be on open and innovative protection of the "intangible cultural heritage" of the village.

A. It is necessary to encourage "intangible cultural heritage" representative inheritors in characteristic villages in living inheritance

In the characteristic village ecosystem, many "intangible cultural heritage" technologies can only be passed on lively by the inheritors or traditional artisans who master it. Therefore, the government should increase its efforts to encourage them. On the one hand, the honorary certificates are necessary to be awarded to the inheritors, and their inheritance status must be recognized, and certain financial support should be given regularly. On the other hand, the government can set up a "intangible cultural heritage" training and transmission institution, and hire the inheritors to participate in imparting knowledge and skills. In this way, the construction skills, traditional crafts, traditional arts, traditional music, traditional medicine, performing arts, heroic epics, folklore, festival etiquette, beliefs and customs that are closely related to the production and life of ethnic minorities can be passed on by these outstanding inheritors through oral and personal teaching to the next generation. It should be pointed out that if there is no young person's understanding, love and worship of teachers, the "intangible cultural heritage" will still face fault problems. For example, the traditional hair style design of the She people is an often overlooked "intangible cultural heritage". During the survey, the researchers interviewed the elderly Zhong Renmei of Juren Mansion, Banyuli Village, Xi'nian Town, Xiapu County, and recorded the traditional hair style of the unmarried girl. However, the traditional hair style of the She people in Banyueli Village has encountered the dilemma of losing the craftsmanship, which reflects the lack of love and identification of the younger generation for the village's traditional culture. Similar dilemmas are also manifested in the She people's ribbon weaving process, paper cutting, bamboo weaving, and drug processing.

B. Living inheritance requires productive protection of "intangible cultural heritage" in the village

At present, many contents of "intangible cultural heritage" have penetrated into many areas of popular clothing, food, housing, travel, and use. The culture of ethnic minority villages still shows the vitality of life that cannot be ignored in the face of industrial civilization and modern culture. Through productive protection, on the one hand, these "intangible cultural heritage" projects may obtain economic benefits and then be able to survive in the market environment [5]. On the other hand, these "intangible cultural heritage" new products can enter millions of households and become a part of the daily life of the general public. A virtuous cycle mechanism and ecological chain can also be established, so as to truly realize the living inheritance of the village's "intangible cultural heritage".

C. It is necessary to integrate "intangible cultural heritage" in the village with modern new ideas in living heritage

The change of traditional production and lifestyle has also changed the customs of ethnic minority villages. It also needs to integrate cultural heritage with people's lives, and absorb new technology and incorporate new ideas while retaining the original cultural essence in living inheritance. New creations have sprung up from tradition, and have been transformed into new forms through continuous accumulation. For example, some cultural practices can enter cultural dissemination through presentations, oral history, and even new media such as Douyin and WeChat with a strong sense of the times, without the need to forcibly retain certain outdated customs or traditional skills. For another example, it is necessary to consider the unified relationship between national craftsmanship, art, and industry in the context of the evolution of world design art. In this way, it not only respects the cultural history of the village, but also makes the "intangible cultural heritage" in the village live in the present, and continues to seek inspiration for sustainable development and innovation.

In terms of the lively inheritance of the culture of ethnic minority villages, the experience of "tourism construction" from Taiwan is instructive and useful. Taiwan's aboriginal tribes are equivalent to the ethnic minorities defined by the mainland, and have great reference value. Looking at the successful experience of "tourism construction" [6], it is particularly worth learning from: First, it sets up a non-governmental group with the participation of elite forces as an organization for tourism construction, and gives tribal communities strong support for people and property. Second, with the appeal of elites, various forms of learning, training, and practice are held to enable the indigenous people to understand the traditional culture of the tribe and master the art skills of tribal creations, so as to change old ideas and stimulate self-development capabilities. Finally, the tourism design with the participation of indigenous people is planned and implemented through the cultural industry. Among them, the building of the cultural industry is the most critical. In contrast, the protection and inheritance of ethnic minority village culture is basically carried out in a top-down manner led by the government, which increasingly shows the disadvantages of poor village residents' initiative, weak persistence and coherence in training, and low participation of social elites.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, the overall protection and lively inheritance of the culture of ethnic minority villages is a long-term and dialectical process. It is necessary to stand at the height of maintaining the "diversity and unity" of the Chinese nation's cultural pattern, strengthen cultural self-confidence (of course, including ethnic minority cultural self-confidence), and look at relevant issues dialectically and historically. At the same time, it is also necessary to recognize the urgency and challenge of protecting and inheriting the culture of ethnic villages as the process of urbanization accelerates.

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