

# Research on the Tourism Development of Traditional Villages in Leizhou Peninsula from H-I-S Perspective

## A Case Study of Chaoxi Village in Leizhou City

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### ABSTRACT

Moderate development of the tourism industry is an effective way to revitalize traditional villages. However, most of the traditional villages in the Leizhou Peninsula, Guangdong are facing difficulties in their development, represented by the Chaoxi Village in Longmen Town. Although the village boasts high-quality tourism resources, ancient deserted buildings have fallen into disrepair, and people there lack the awareness of tourism development. Based on the three perspectives of the Host, Industry, and Space, this research demonstrates the development and types of tourism in the Chaoxi Village and designs solutions and development paths based on the existing problems.

**Keywords:** Traditional Villages, Leizhou Peninsula, H-I-S.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Under the guidance of the “Rural Revitalization Strategy” put forward in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is advisable to promote diversified development and experimentation in rural areas<sup>[1]</sup>. As traditional villages enjoy the unique architectural style, local culture, resource endowment for tourism development, and non-renewable cultural heritage of farming civilization, they represent resources and potential that cannot be ignored to promote the rural revitalization strategy<sup>[2]</sup>. China’s traditional villages are widely distributed with distinct regional differences. Some traditional villages have driven rural revitalization through tourism development, while others are facing thorny issues such as natural decline, hollowing, lack of development entities, and destruction of ancient buildings. Therefore, scientific research and guidance is urgently needed in tourism development.

The Leizhou Peninsula is located in southwestern Guangdong, under the jurisdiction of Zhanjiang City. Due to its unique geographical location and historical culture, there are many characteristic traditional villages, such as Chaoxi Village, Bangtang Village, Donglin Village in Leizhou City, Su’er Village in Suixi County which were all selected as the first batch of the list of national traditional villages in 2012. There are currently

12 traditional Chinese villages in the Leizhou Peninsula, of which 9 are in Leizhou. Although the village boasts high-quality tourism resources, ancient deserted buildings have fallen into disrepair, and people there lack the awareness of tourism development. Chaoxi Village is a typical example.

In recent years, traditional villages in Lingnan have received attention, with the research objects focusing on the villages with Cantonese culture in the Pearl River Delta<sup>[3][4]</sup>. Because of the complex terrain, inconvenient transportation, and language barriers (most natives speak Leizhou dialect which is a branch of Minnan dialect) and little communication with the outside world, the Leizhou peninsula has maintained its cultural authenticity and residential settlement with distinctive characteristics, which makes it difficult to conduct relevant scientific research.

Therefore, based on the three perspectives of the Host, Industry, and Space proposed by Tao Hui and other scholars<sup>[5]</sup>, with the methods of field investigation and data analysis, the research presents a comprehensive analysis of population flow, industrial structure, village space, and utilization of ancient buildings in the context of changes in human settlements in Chaoxi Village, Leizhou, and summarizes the key elements, transformation scenarios, and innovative development paths.

**2. THEORETICAL BASIS**

**2.1. The definition of traditional villages and related research**

Traditional villages are derived from the concept of “ancient villages”. In 2011, the four central ministries and commissions after soliciting the opinions of experts and scholars extended the concept of “ancient villages” to “traditional villages”, and clearly stated: Traditional villages refer to villages that formed earlier and enjoyed rich traditional resources with historical, cultural, scientific, artistic, social, and economic value, thus deserving to be protected [6]. As of June 2019, China has published 5 batches of traditional village lists with a total of 6,819 villages.

Traditional villages have attracted the attention of scholars from multiple disciplines such as anthropology, architecture, geography, and tourism. Since the 21st

century, research has developed rapidly, with richer types and more diversified content. Based on research in tourism planning, resource evaluation, and protection, scholars have begun to divert attention to the perception of tourism, community engagement, management, and profit coordination [7]. These studies focus more on the evaluation and protection of heritage than on the linkage between human survival and development and industry as well as space.

**2.2. Introduction of H-I-S Perspective**

Scholar TAO Hui and others have conducted a HIS three-dimensional analysis on traditional villages, namely Host (abbreviated “H”), Industry (abbreviated “I”), and Space (abbreviated “S”), and have studied the influence of their dynamic development on the evolution of traditional villages [5]. The relevant attributes and indicators of each dimension are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Attributes and Analysis Indicators of H-I-S

Dimension	Attributes	Analysis Indicators
H	Host Villagers	When H <sub>1</sub> is hollow, it means a large outflow of population and a low proportion of the resident population. When H <sub>2</sub> is dynamic, it means a high proportion of indigenous residents and increasing activities in villages.
I	Industry Industrial Structure	I <sub>1</sub> refers to the original industries which include the traditional planting industry, breeding industry, and handicraft industry. I <sub>2</sub> means new industries which include tourism and leisure, cultural and creative industries.
S	Space Spatial Change in Villages	S <sub>1</sub> means that the original spatial patterns of villages are maintained with no or little reconstruction. S <sub>2</sub> means that villages have been reconstructed with new space expanded.

**Table 2.** Classification of traditional villages based on H-I-S

No.	Combinations	Types	Introduction
1	H <sub>1</sub> I <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub> Population outflow + original industry + original space	Hollow type	A larger number of indigenous residents flow out; there are no emergent industries and the original industries are abandoned. The original space of the villages without expansion or improvement.
2	H <sub>2</sub> I <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub> Multi-indigenous residents + original industry + original space	Involution type	Most of the indigenous residents stay in the village and the industry and spatial structure remain intact in the village.
3	H <sub>2</sub> I <sub>2</sub> S <sub>2</sub> Multi-indigenous residents + new industry + new space	Interfusion type	As indigenous residents are affected by new industries, traditional means of livelihoods have changed, and village space has been adjusted due to industrial development.

4	H <sub>2</sub> I <sub>1</sub> S <sub>2</sub> Multi-indigenous residents + original industry + new space	Extension type	Based on the development of indigenous residents and industry, the village space is expanded outward, presenting a state of spatial extension.
5	H <sub>1</sub> I <sub>2</sub> S <sub>2</sub> Population outflow+ new industry + new space	Gentrificati-on	When indigenous residents flow out, new communities emerge, bringing new industries and the transformation of space.

(Drew by the author. Data source: Tao Hui, Ma Guoqing, Ran Feixiao, Qiao Jing. The classification and development model of traditional villages from H-I-S perspective: a case study of Handan[J]. Tourism Tribune)

Based on the H-I-S combination, scholars drawing on the case study of the Handan village divide traditional villages into five types which are hollow village, involution type, interfusion type, extension type, and gentrification. Table 2 shows the details.

However, there is no further discussion on which dimension to transform different types into each other and solve problems regarding certain types. This research aims to take the Chaoxi Village (hereafter referred to the Village) as an example to design the dimensions and development path to make breakthroughs.

### 3. CASE STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

#### 3.1 Survey of the Chaoxi Village

The research focuses on the Chaoxi Village, Longmen Town, Leizhou City (County-level City of Zhanjiang) with the method of field investigations carried out on the village and related administrative departments. As regards the first investigation undertaken between August 9 and August 13, 2020, the observational method and data collection were used to observe villagers' life, conditions of ancient streets and lanes, the patterns of the village, and to collect relevant statistical data and records of the village. In terms of the second investigation conducted between October 6 and October 8, 2020, officials, primary school principals, villagers, and the director of the Leizhou Tourism Bureau were interviewed to comprehensively collect information concerning the historical development, residents, industrial development, and space utilization of the village.

#### 3.2 Development Overview of the Chaoxi Village

Chaoxi Village is located in the north of Longmen Town, Leizhou City, Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province. It is 21 kilometers away from Leizhou City and about 4.5 kilometers away from the downtown of Longmen. The

Village earns its name as it faces three rivers. It was built during the years of the Chongzhen Emperor's reign (1627–1644) of the Ming Dynasty with a history of more than 380 years.

The Village is renowned for its complete preservation of the traditional features of the Qing Dynasty, boasting a large-scale building complex with unique characteristics of Southern China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The ancient residential buildings are mostly brick-wood structures with an orderly layout. The village now enjoys 85 grand courtyards, 9 towers, and ancient buildings such as "Chaoyidi", and "Guanchadi", "Mingjingdi", which embodies the glorious past. In the village, there are six vertical lanes and two horizontal lanes with bluestone steps where large-scale sacrificial activities are held. In 2005, the village was selected as one of the second batches of 24 famous national historical and cultural villages by the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Culture. Later, it was evaluated as a historical and cultural village and a provincial ancient village by Guangdong Province and was listed as one of the first batch of Traditional Chinese Villages Catalog.

After the Chaoxi Village was rated as a national historical and cultural village, it has attracted tourists and scholars who have studied historical and cultural buildings, including the research team of Ruan Yisan, an expert, on protecting national historical and cultural ancient cities and towns, who has researched several historical buildings in the Village and has therefore raised its reputation [8]. However, due to the lack of protection and development of ancient buildings, most of them have fallen into disrepair for a long time.

In terms of tourism development, according to village officials and villagers, the Village is visited by sporadic tourists, mainly self-driving tourists. As there are no corresponding tourism services or reception facilities in the Village, tourism development is still in its infancy.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF THE TYPES OF THE CHAOXI VILLAGE BASED ON THE H-I-S PERSPECTIVE**

### ***4.1 Host (H) Analysis of the Chaoxi Village***

The village under the jurisdiction of Wang's Village Committee is home to 365 households with a total of 2,060 people, of whom 400 to 500 are permanent residents. As 75% of young and middle-aged people go out to work, few of them go to the Pearl River Delta, while most of them live and work in Longmen Town or Leizhou City. Since the Village is only 6.4 kilometers away from downtown Longmen which enjoys convenient transportation and well-equipped infrastructures, the town has attracted most of Chaoxi Villagers. At present, most of the people living in Chaoxi Village are middle-aged and elderly people and left-behind children.

According to villagers' oral and historical records, the Village was first built during the years of the Chongzhen Emperor's reign (1627–1644) of the Ming Dynasty with its ancestors dating back to Chen Sanliang, the eighteenth grandson of Chen Sanlu. Most of the people living in the Village are descendants of Yuan Yi, who became the gentry because of their expertise in imperial examinations, and 95% of the village's main income comes from land rent<sup>[9]</sup>. The ancient buildings now in the Village were purchased by retired officials who returned to their hometowns. The local gentry with good qualities controls the management of the clan, maintains the cultural traditions and the operations of various affairs including the organized planning, construction, and clan activities of the settlement. Therefore, the Village was once prosperous with greater regional influence in history. However, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the land reform, the owners of the wealthy houses in the Village fled everywhere. Except for the two houses for public use, others were all redistributed to the poor, lower, and middle peasants. After the land reform, the poor and lower-middle peasants became new managers, which overturned the original management model in the Village<sup>[10]</sup>.

After the land reform, as the population increased, agriculture was unable to meet villagers' livelihoods. A large number of young and middle-aged people moved to urban areas, while the elderly and children were left behind, which led to the increasing hollowing in the Village. In addition, due to historical reasons, as the property rights of ancient buildings are not clearly stated, ordinary residents lack the motivation and ability to repair them, while those who have the ability or the consciousness of protection are restricted. According to village officials' memories, some wealthy descendants returned to their hometowns to negotiate to repurchase old houses, but they were rejected by the villagers. The

villagers' lack of awareness of protection and development has led to low enthusiasm of the villagers who return to their hometown to construct and repair ancient buildings. As there was no alternation between the indigenous groups and new residents, the Village falls into the category of H<sub>1</sub>-population outflow.

### ***4.2 Industry (I) Analysis of the Chaoxi Village***

Located on the Leizhou Peninsula, the Village is a subtropical humid monsoon climate with sufficient sunshine, and its local temperature and conditions are suitable for the growth of a variety of crops and fruit trees. Due to the small land and large population in the Village, the low income of crops is difficult to sustain the villagers in the face of a reduced proportion of food crops and part of the abandoned cultivated land.

Some of the villagers who move to Longmen Town leave their hometowns but still keep their fields, and they begin to cash crops mainly including eucalyptus and tropical fruits instead of food crops. According to statistics, the fields and gardens in the Village currently cover a total area of 1,800 acres, with the farmland used to grow cash crops such as sugarcane, pepper, eucalyptus, and lychee. There are small areas of rural picking orchards, such as lychees and myrtle, which reflects villagers' consciousness of developing leisure agricultural tourism which is however extensive. At present, the overall output value of agriculture is relatively low, and there is no large-scale contracted farming due to scattered fields and unmanned planning.

In addition, there are no restaurants, shops, and other leisure and commercial services in the Village. Therefore, agriculture remains the major industry, which falls into the category of I<sub>1</sub>: primary industry.

### ***4.3 Space (S) Analysis of the Chaoxi Village***

In terms of spatial pattern, the Village covers 11 hectares of land. The whole village sits northwest facing southeast, with ponds and streams in the south. The village features a comb-like layout with a compact and square shape and a clear skeleton, which has been well preserved. The architectural layout originated during the years of the Kangxi Emperor's reign (1654–1722) and the Qianlong Emperor's reign (1711–1799) when Yuan Yi's descendants rectified the roads in the Village after achieving fame. The ancient alleys of the Village still retain bluestone steps, with a total of six vertical lanes and two horizontal lanes.

The most valuable asset in the Village is the residential complex, built in the Ming and Qing dynasties, which consist of 85 brick-wood houses. The existing well-preserved ancient residential buildings include the "Chaoyidi", "Rulindi", "Fenzhoudi", "Mingjingdi", and "Fude", "Dehui", all of which feature

courtyard layout. Among them, in the largest building “Chaoyidi”, traces were left of artillery fire from the Revolutionary War on the defense tower.

Although the overall landscape of the Village is well preserved, the utilization rate of historical buildings is low. As residents were unable to repair the ancient buildings, some houses were abandoned and collapsed. After the Village was rated as the traditional village, the first phase of the emergency repair and protection project was carried out. However, the repair project was not properly supervised; the repair technology was rough; the related management was in chaos; building components with characteristic craftsmanship were stolen; the exquisite patterns were concealed by temporary painting. This brought about the shutdown of the repair project by relevant departments. Nowadays, scientific guidance is still lacked to develop the Village. A few newly built houses are extended along the periphery or rebuilt based on the disrepair, but, generally speaking, the original spatial form is maintained, which falls into the category of  $S_1$ .

**4.4 Types of traditional villages**

The Village suffers serious population loss and lacks development entities. Due to historical reasons, the property rights of ancient buildings are not clearly stated. After the local gentry disappears, an effective management mechanism has not been established to protect the Village, and the villagers have a weak awareness of protecting ancient buildings and developing tourism. At present, the industry is still dominated by traditional agriculture, with residents moving to Longmen Town to live or go out to work. The space in the Village has been deserted and the original pattern has not changed much, which belongs to the hollow type. However, the architecture and the value of local culture have been preserved, which proves to be valuable tourism assets.

**Table 3.** Types of traditional villages

Village	Chaoxi Village
H dimension	$H_1$ means serious hollowing and weak awareness of protection and development.
I dimension	$I_1$ means original industry dominated by traditional agriculture.
S dimension	$S_1$ means few changes in the space of the Village.
Type	Hollow type

**5. PROBLEMS IN THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGES OF LEIZHOU PENINSULA AND SOLUTIONS**

**5.1 Analysis of Existing Problems and Causes**

As the Chaoxi Village is a typical hollow traditional village in the Leizhou Peninsula, other traditional villages also face the same problems as follows:

(1) Most villagers fled out, which led to the hollowing of the Village; villagers lacked the awareness of protecting ancient buildings and historical culture; ancient buildings of the village were abandoned. This didn’t live up to its reputation as the traditional village. The main reason was that there were more people but less land on the Leizhou Peninsula, especially the Leizhou City, so villagers would make more money when going out to work. Meanwhile, with the development of urbanization, the advantage of transportation convenience has become a driving factor for population outflow. As the Village is close to the county or downtown, villagers prefer to live in the town with better medical services, education, and living facilities.

(2) The traditional gentry has disappeared and the property rights of ancient buildings remained unclear, which led to the lack of an effective mechanism or organization to protect the village. Since many owners of the old mansions represented the local gentry, they have played a key role in safeguarding fairness and justice, presiding over the construction and development, and maintaining the autonomy and stability of the village. However, owing to historical changes and changes in the organizational structure of the Village, together with serious brain drain, the current cadre system, especially the non-native managers, failed to promote the sustainable development of the village’s history and culture [11].

(3) Despite the great value of tourism resources, it is difficult to introduce investors to develop the village, which results in the lagging tourism industry. In addition, the Leizhou dialect (a branch of Minnan dialect) popular in Leizhou makes it more difficult for investors to communicate, and there are no leaders with strong appeal to facilitate effective investment, cooperation, and negotiations.

**5.2 Key Dimensions to Make Breakthroughs and Vision of Development Path**

From the above analysis, population flow, organizational structure, talents, industry development, and leadership all fall into the dimension of the Host (H) which is key to the development of traditional villages in the Leizhou Peninsula. With the protection and utilization of the space (Dimension S), the development

of the industry (Dimension I) can be driven to promote the coordinated development of three dimensions, thus solving the problem of hollowing.

At present, if villagers want to make breakthroughs in the dimension of Host (H), it is effective to gather new elites, such as the village sages in a new era who enjoys better social, financial, and technical resources. They can bring about the modern management experience, scientific techniques, and talents and funds needed for the development of the village to drive the return of hometowns and employment. In addition, they can act as cultural leaders, improve villagers' awareness of protecting and developing traditional villages, organize the planning and development of villages,

explore and transform the patterns of villages, and develop new forms of tourism, so that three dimensions will be mutually reinforcing and achieve coordinated development. Figure 1 shows the details.

In terms of practice, it is necessary to give play to the village sages' role in a new era and introduce corresponding incentive policies to attract them to return to their hometowns to start businesses and develop new industries. For example, they are encouraged to develop leisure accommodation with idle farmhouse courtyards, to develop leisure agriculture with abandoned farms. It is urgent to clarify the property rights of ancient houses and organize professional teams to repair and revitalize ancient buildings.

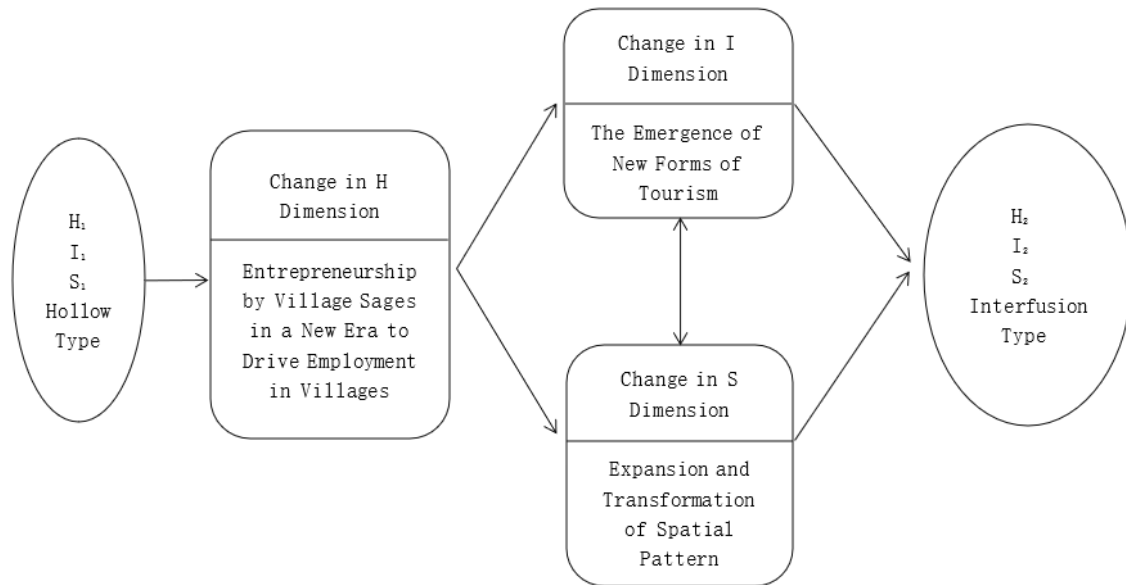


Figure 1 The vision of the critical transition path

6. CONCLUSION

The Leizhou Peninsula is rich in tourism resources featuring traditional villages, but the protection of villages and development of tourism lag behind. Based on the analysis model of HIS, this paper illustrates the backward development of tourism in the Chaoxi Village, in terms of host, industry, and space. The Village is a typical hollow one, which reveals the dilemma facing traditional villages in Leizhou City. Among the three dimensions, there are notable problems in the Host (H) dimension which is the key to seeking breakthroughs. Therefore, the idea is proposed to promote the formation of the class of village sages in a new era. The changes in the Host (H) dimension are expected to drive the changes in the industry (I) and the space (S) dimensions, transforming a hollow village into an interfused one, thus achieving the sound development of exploration and protection through the development of the tourism industry.

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