

Study on Protection Strategies of Traditional Villages in the Central Plains of China

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ABSTRACT

Background: Traditional villages in the Central Plains reflect the economic, social, cultural, and architectural technology characteristics of the region during a specific period. Their composition not only carries the coordination between people's living environment and the natural environment but also reflects people's social relations and institutional culture in collective living conditions. Therefore, it is of rich sociological and practical significance to explore the causes of the living environment formed by traditional villages in the Central Plains over thousands of years, the mutual influence of productivity and production relations, and the decline and transformation of the spatial environment. **Method:** With the help of theoretical systems such as architectural typology, residential area, and cultural geography. Research is conducted through on-site surveys and literature collection. **Results:** Conduct static research on the factors that affect the spatial form of villages and conduct classification and exploration from the aspects of village location, village form, spatial characteristics, courtyard layout, and residential characteristics. And build a research framework based on the formation logic, external morphological characteristics, and internal evolution mechanisms of the Central Plains villages and traditional residences and analyse the causes and cultural attributes of the Central Plains traditional villages and residences. **Conclusion:** From the perspective of cultural continuity and sustainable development, and based on the current situation, protection difficulties, and development opportunities of traditional villages and residential culture in the Central Plains, multiple protection paths for traditional villages in the Central Plains are drawn.

Keywords: *Cultural Reshaping; Protection Strategies; Social Relations; Traditional Villages*

Background

Traditional villages refer to rural villages that have accumulated and inherited local and ethnic culture during a certain historical development process (Ren, 2023). The "Traditional Village Evaluation and Identification Indicator System (Trial)" (2012) issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and other four ministries requires that villages be built at least before 1980 (Yu, 2023). And there are villages with good preservation of historical buildings, traditional patterns, or unique intangible cultural heritage and with a certain degree of vitality. As a central region of China, Henan Province has 205 national-level traditional villages (Li, 2021). These traditional villages have their own unique culture. Their landscape characteristics have developed stably and slowly over a long period of time. They also have an important role in the cultural construction of the Chinese nation. important value. In recent years, with the rapid advancement of urbanization, most traditional villages have been abandoned or damaged to varying degrees. Traditional culture has also been slowly forgotten, and historical buildings have been gradually replaced. The features of some traditional villages are gradually lost and tend to deteriorate further, which has begun to attract widespread attention from all walks of life. The traditional rural architecture studied in this thesis is located in the central area of Henan Province, including four cities such as Zhengzhou, Xuchang, Pingdingshan, and Luohe (Li, 2021).



Fig 1: According to the topographic map, there are plains and mountains in central Henan Province. This thesis mainly selects plain areas as research samples

After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: "Rural areas are the birthplace of our country's traditional civilization, and the roots of local culture cannot be broken (Su, Liu & Zhang, 2023). Rural areas cannot become desolate rural areas, left-behind rural areas, or hometowns in memories. After the traditional villages were listed on the protection list, they began to carry out demonstration protection, development, and utilization in an orderly manner.

Literature Review

In the first stage, from the 1940s to the 1980s, the research methods mainly focused on surveying and mapping surveys, organizing records, and inductive narratives. Typical works include Mr. Liang Sicheng's *A History of Chinese Architecture* and the *Commentary on Ying Zao Fa Shi*. In the second stage, from the 1980s to 2000, a large number of relevant research documents appeared in Chinese academic circles.

The main literatures such as: 1991; Lu Yuanding, "Chinese Traditional Houses and Culture," and Chen Congzhou, *Chinese Folk House*. After 2000, Chinese academic circles used computer modeling for traditional village space research methods to analyze the relationship between the terrain and landscape

environment of the village space and the layout of residential buildings and integrate multi-major research (Yang, 2023). The main literature, such as 2009 by Liu Senlin, *Chinese Dwellings: An Analysis of Traditional Residential Architecture*, 2019 by Wei Weiyi (Northwest University), (Study University), studies the protection of traditional villages in Shaanxi Province. Not formatted

In recent years, as China's urbanization process accelerates, traditional villages have been affected by regional economic and social development, and their village spatial forms have also begun to undergo drastic changes. The Chinese government and scholars have begun to pay more attention to rural protection and cultural inheritance, and research methods have become increasingly diversified (Tu, 2023). In 2014, China introduced the "Beautiful Countryside" policy, and in 2017, China's 19th National Congress clearly proposed the "rural revitalization" strategy. More and more scholars and architects are pouring into the countryside from cities. They not only conduct theoretical research but also participate in practical transformation. One of the most representative designers is Mr. Wang Shu, winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. He has passionately contributed to the protection and inheritance of China's rural traditional culture (Li & Zhang, 2023). Generally speaking, academic research results on my country's ancient cultural villages have sprung up endlessly. Not only are domestic researchers working hard, but also foreign research results are constantly being introduced to the country.

Research Gaps

There are three gaps in the research about national and international data:

The first is research area: At present, rural residential buildings are mainly concentrated in the southern, western, and northern regions of China, while the Henan area, where the damage to rural residential buildings is more serious, has less research literature.

The second is the protection principle. Most of the current research on rural residential buildings advocates the principle of overall planning, which makes traditional buildings tend to be similar and cannot reflect regional characteristics. However, this thesis proposes an improvement method of "local adjustment" to allow buildings, villages, and landscapes to pass through. Small local improvements continue to belong to local culture and spirit.

The third is protection measures: emphasize the development of rural industries, establish rural brands, and make more young people willing to return to the countryside.

Research Questions

Based on this study program, there are 4 main research questions researched.

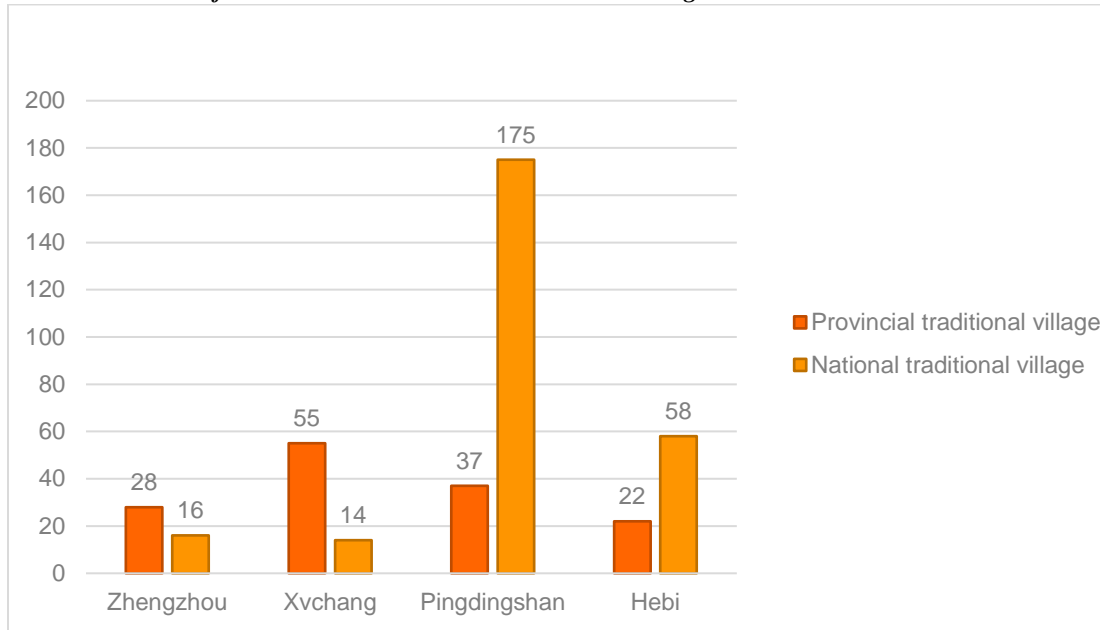
- How did the residential architecture in the central part of Henan Province come into being?
- What is the shape of the rural residential architecture in central Henan Province?
- What are the difficulties faced by the rural residential architecture in central Henan Province?
- How to protect rural residential buildings in central Henan Province?

Methods

With the help of theoretical systems such as architecture, communication, and human geography, this thesis conducts research from both static and dynamic aspects through on-the-spot investigation, data collection, and data statistics using certain analytical techniques. Based on the research framework of generation logic, external morphological characteristics, and internal evolution mechanisms of the main body, it analyzes the causes and cultural attributes of the characteristic rural residential building structure in the central part of Henan Province. This study summarizes the characteristics of rural architecture in the central part of Henan Province and explores the reasons for its formation and design concepts from a

historical perspective so that traditional culture and regional culture can be inherited and developed.

Table 1: Number of National and Provincial Traditional Villages in Central Cities in Henan Province

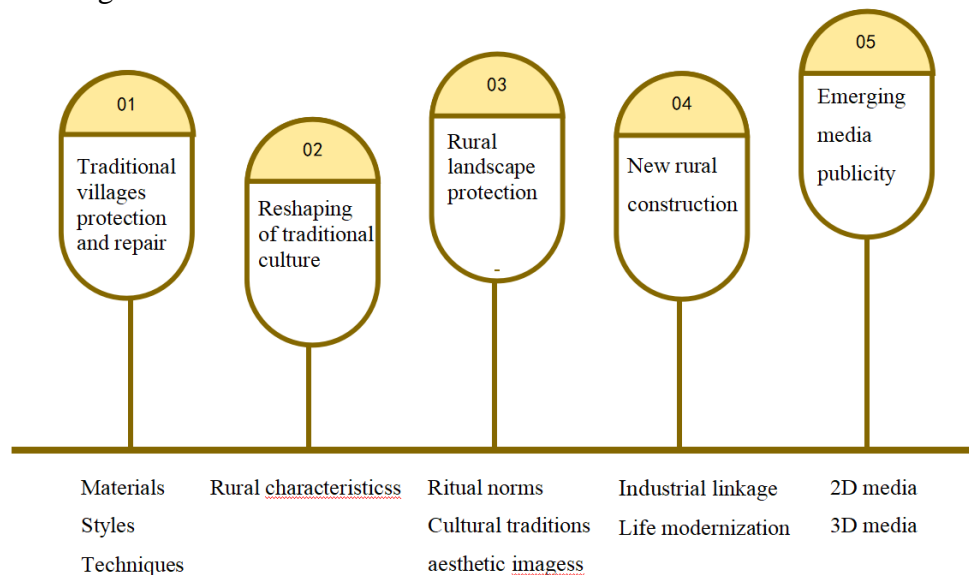


Note: The data is based on the catalog published on the website of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of China.

Results

Stimulate The Intrinsic Vitality of History and Culture

Traditional villages in the Central Plains store the long-standing geographical culture and clan traditions of the region. As the birthplace of national culture, the culture of the Central Plains region has high cultural status and research value. However, with the development of the economy, these cultures have gradually declined. In the process of historical and cultural regeneration of traditional villages, cultural preservation and continuation must be the primary task. Through modern means, we can stimulate the inherent vitality of historical culture and use emerging publicity media to revitalize traditional village culture and enhance people's cultural recognition and cultural cohesion.



Functional Positioning of Village Development

Different villages have different functional orientations. For example, the commercial and defense functions of "Lidukou" Village in Jiaxian County, Pingdingshan City, can still be seen in its retained village layout, and Modongying Village in Zhaozhuang Town, Baofeng County, Pingdingshan City. Its landscape scenery and the preservation of the bronze worship society are its unique expressions. Every well-preserved village has its own unique position. Whether it is tourism, commerce, cultural sites, etc., in the process of historical and cultural regeneration, it must be preserved and developed, the original positioning must be destroyed, and the design and planning must be redesigned, which is extremely wrong in traditional village construction.

Development of Industrial Economy

The fundamental reason for the decline of historical and cultural villages is the lack of competitive industrial and economic vitality of their own. When facing rural development, especially the regeneration of traditional village history and culture, it is necessary to think about its inherent economic development power and regeneration vitality (Peng *et al.*, 2023). Actively cultivating industrial and economic vitality with its own characteristics has become an important proposition for the protection and inheritance of historical and cultural villages today (Li & Zhang, 2023). On the one hand, the historical and cultural connotations of the historical and cultural villages themselves, the ancient buildings with local traditional features, and the "Feng Shui" characteristics that reflect the idea of integrating heaven, earth, and people in the village space can become the basis for the development of today's ancient village tourism industry. An important foundation to promote a series of derivative economic types such as tourist souvenirs, local specialty agricultural and sideline products, farmhouse catering, and homestays; on the other hand, historical and cultural villages should also promptly adjust the industrial types of the original township industries, especially for the ecological environment. Enterprises run by towns and villages that cause pollution should be determined to adjust or even close. At the same time, we should consolidate the basic position of rural economic development, advocate adapting measures to local conditions, give full play to the diversity of rural industries, and attach importance to financial assistance to rural communities to achieve the sustainability of rural economic development.

Protection and Transformation of Space Environment

The infrastructure of traditional cultural villages should be actively configured. In the current process of village protection and reconstruction, attention should be paid to the construction and improvement of various infrastructures in the village, especially the connection and discharge of drinking water pipe networks and domestic sewage discharge pipe networks, and thoroughly eliminate crude outdoor morning toilets. For those villages that are temporarily unable to access the household sewage pipe network, it is urgent to build public toilets with a reasonable service radius to meet the basic living facilities of the villagers. There are also other infrastructures, such as electricity, heating, gas, etc., that will be transformed and upgraded based on the priorities of the villages' respective economic and geographical conditions.

External Policy Support

As there is strong external policy support for traditional village regeneration work, organizational and implementation mechanisms are very important.

First, the provincial rural work office should further play its core role in policy formulation and leadership. Through a large amount of in-depth research and feedback, it can timely summarize the experience of policy implementation and promote it for reference. At the same time, it can timely summarize and inform problems to avoid destructive construction behaviors.

Secondly, further give play to the coordinating and organizational role of the county and city party committees and governments within the administrative divisions, and through the coordination and promotion of the county and city rural work offices, combined with the joint efforts of relevant departments including the Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau, the Cultural Bureau, the Tourism Bureau, and other relevant departments, comprehensively deploy the protection and regeneration of historical and cultural villages.

Third, the role of township organizations in implementation should be actively brought into play, and the active participation of relevant village organizations and villagers should be fully mobilized to avoid "one end is hot, and the other is cold," that is, only the government pays attention to it while the villagers stand by and watch without enthusiasm. In addition, the continuous guiding role of the planning and design expert team should be brought into play in many aspects. There is a lack of cultural awareness, planning technology, and construction technology in regenerating historical and cultural villages in various places. There is an urgent need for experts in planning, architecture, and cultural relic protection to supervise the whole process. and provide guidance to avoid damaging historical and cultural relics during the renovation process. Therefore, appropriate channels are needed to encourage planning and design teams to actively participate in and guide the implementation of historical and cultural village protection planning and construction throughout the process to avoid the "back-to-back" situation of planners' design and construction (Wang, Xu & Zhang, 2023).

Results and Discussion

Understanding Misunderstanding

In the process of regenerating the history and culture of traditional villages, it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings about their historical connotation. Many areas mistakenly believe that they are restoring the village's style and features to a certain historical period and kicking out all the features that do not fit this period. The formation of neat and unified characteristics in village blocks is lazy one-size-fits-all thinking. In the planning process, we can use the architectural and spatial characteristics of a certain period as the main basis, allowing the existence of architectural styles from other periods, and history will continue. The village is constantly developing. Only in this way can we truly respect the history and culture of the village.

Aesthetic Misunderstandings

There are many wrong practices on how to reproduce the cultural connotation of the village and how to plan the village's guidance system and people's flow lines. For example, many areas place bottles and cans at the street entrances after extracting the historical and cultural elements of the village. A tank, an enlarged arch gate, or a larger square with some fitness equipment piled inside. Not only are these practices not based on the original style of the village, but they continue to pile up elements, losing the original simplicity and natural beauty of the village.

Practical Misunderstandings

Through investigation, many historical and cultural villages have their own inherent regularity, which not only reflects local historical and cultural elements but also is an organic combination with the natural topography. This is a simple "landscape" thought that is spontaneously formed and formed. Disaster resilience awareness. Therefore, in the practice process, it is necessary to guide the participation of local villagers as much as possible so that they can become the recognizers and defenders of the regeneration of the village's historical culture. In addition, during the construction process, local geographical features must be fully considered, and the original natural features and water systems must not be destroyed for the sake of beauty. Applicable technologies must be actively promoted, local materials must be used according to local conditions, and spiritual and functional regeneration issues must be solved.

Conclusion

Research on the historical and cultural regeneration of traditional villages in the Central Plains, taking the protection, inheritance, and utilization of historical and cultural villages and excellent traditional culture as an important support for rural social development and an important part of rural construction, and effectively increasing the protection and transformation of historical and cultural villages and the surrounding environment. Strengthen efforts to carefully protect the architectural form, natural environment, traditional style, and folk customs of historical and cultural villages so that these historical and cultural heritages can last forever, let cultural inheritance and rural economic development support each other, and improve the living environment of traditional villages.

Declarations

Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate: Not applicable.

Conflict of Interests: Not applicable.

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