



## Reconsideration of Traditional Villages under the Rural Revitalization Strategy

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**ABSTRACT:** This article poses questions from three aspects: the recent changes in Azheke Village in Yuanyang Country, which I have personally participated in; the analysis of more than ten different types of villages I have encountered in recent years; and the statistical analysis of 223 villages I have investigated over the past 20 years. Under the strategy of rural revitalization, the protection and development of traditional villages are further considered. The three issues of the arduousness, sustainability, and vitality of traditional village protection and development are discussed. Then, problems such as the difficulties of protection and development, poverty-stricken villages, hollow villages, traditional villages, and their dwellings, the future direction of non-legacy, outside intervention, talent promotion, and so on, are specifically analyzed.

**KEY WORDS:** rural revitalization; traditional village protection and development; difficulty; sustainability; force of revitalization

At the end of 2016, the author was invited to write an article entitled “Considerations on Some Questions of Traditional Villages Research” [1], which was subsequently published in South Architecture, Issue 1, 2017. It is the author’s review and reflection on past issues, such as the contradiction between the protection and development of traditional villages and the disconnection between planning and implementation. In recent years, the author has continued to participate in the research, planning, and consulting work of some traditional villages, and has encountered some issues to think about. Especially after the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017 proposed the rural revitalization strategy, he deeply felt that the problems of traditional villages are inseparable from the rural revitalization strategy. The protection and development of traditional villages is actually

the concrete manifestation of rural revitalization. This has given him some new thoughts on the future of traditional villages.

This article is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the problems raised in reality, and the second part goes into the thinking and exploration of the main issues.

### 1 The identification of real-world issues

#### 1.1 Let’s talk about the small changes in Azheke

After completing the protection and development plan for the Azheke traditional village of Yuanyang County in the core area of the Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, a World Cultural Heritage site, in early 2015, [2] my team and I decided to stay and explore the concept of “integration of planning and implementation” [3], and I personally participated in the implementation of the plan. From July

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to November 2015, we conducted a maintenance and renovation experiment on a Hani mushroom house, which achieved good results [4]. It has improved villagers' awareness of the value of their mushroom houses, changing their mindset from "wanting to demolish" to "willing to renovate"; it has also changed the leadership's thinking, making them realize that it is better to "renovate the inside and preserve the outside" than to "ignoring the inside and renovate the outside" for mushroom houses. From 2016 to 2017, we participated in the on-site design and construction guidance for the environmental improvement of Azheke Village. By the end of 2017, the traditional features of Azheke Village had been well protected, and the living environment had improved to a certain extent.

Since 2018, Professor Bao Jigang's team at Sun Yat-sen University has launched the "Azheke Plan" for tourism in Azheke Village. For three years, they have sent graduate students to the village every year to help villagers develop tourism, and adopted an "endogenous development model" to ensure that villagers directly benefit economically from tourism (dividends have been distributed three times so far, with each household receiving thousands of yuan) [5].

Looking back over the past five or six years, Azheke Village has indeed undergone some changes: the village environment has improved - infrastructure has improved, traditional cultural elements have been restored, and tourism and leisure facilities have been increased; the mushroom houses are basically intact - residents' dilapidated houses have been generally repaired, houses that damage the appearance have been renovated, and the traditional appearance of the entire village is basically intact (Figure 1); village tourism has developed - village-centered tourism has been launched, the number of domestic and foreign tourists has increased significantly, and villagers have directly benefited from tourism; the mental outlook of the villagers has changed - a small number of young people who had gone out to work have returned to the village to participate in tourism work, the number of women engaged in side jobs has increased, which has had a positive impact on the education of children in the village, and the villagers' awareness and enthusiasm for pro-

tection have increased.



Figure 1 The current appearance of Azheke Village in Yuanyang

Azheke is being protected, and Azheke is developing. In the past few years, there have been two teams working in the village, each at different times. They share a common point: the former realized that more than 90% of the village planning that did not involve implementation was "useless," while the latter believed that rural tourism planning that only produced drawings and submitted reports was "of no use to the village at all." The leaders of both teams, without any prior coordination, coincidentally shared the same thoughts, and both conducted new professional experiments in Azheke. In addition, we should mention three young people from outside Azheke Village in the past two years: Xiao Wang, the Deputy Secretary of the County Youth League Committee, who was appointed as the village head, came up with many ideas for the protection and development of the village, he communicated and persuaded the villagers, playing a significant role in the process; Xiao Yang, a master's student (now a doctoral student) sent by Sun Yat-sen University to the village as a "tourism village chief," made great contributions to the development of tourism in Azheke, including thinking of ways to set policies, organizing villagers, and promoting it to the outside world (posting "TikTok"); Xiaotian, the housekeeper of the "Follower Inn" and a young woman from Sichuan who truly loves Azheke, mingles with the women and children in the village, and invisibly play a role in providing "compulsory education" for them.

The changes in Azheke today are gratifying, but they can only be "temporary relief"; the worry is that the protection and development of Azheke in recent years have all been driven by external forces, not from the villagers. The villagers are still the ones being driven, and today's progress does not mean future success. Let me ask: As the

“external forces” of the two teams and three young people will eventually withdraw, who will the village rely on in the future? Can the protection of Azheke continue in the future? What will Azheke look like in the future? We are not yet absolutely sure about this. This reminds me of the previous incident more than ten years ago when the protection of Jingkou Village in Yuanyang deteriorated and tourism declined. It is worth pondering how to prevent it.

### 1.2 Reflections on some of the villages I have come into contact with in recent years

In addition to the actual participation in the work in Azheke Village, in recent years, the author has also come into contact with dozens of villages (not all of which are national-level traditional villages) through meetings, inspections, consultations, and planning. Among them, the following are typical and impressive ones:

(1) Villages that rely on their own efforts and achieve more comprehensive protection and development. For example, Yuanqian Community of Qingqiao Village in Xiaomen City, relying on the leadership of local talents and the cooperation of community assistants (Taiwanese community planners), has vigorously developed agricultural and sideline industries in the community and promoted the protection and restoration of the village’s traditional culture. Ginkgo Village in Tengchong County, Yunnan Province, has built a good tourist attraction by relying on its own ginkgo forest resources, which has helped the villagers get rich and protect the environment (Figure 2).

(2) Villages that rely on their own efforts but whose protection and development are not comprehensive. For example, Bingdao Village in Shuangjiang, Yunnan, one of the first national traditional villages, has greatly driven the prosperity of the entire village with the resources and brand effect of “Iceland Tea.” However, due to the needs of tea making, the entry of enterprises, and the development of life, the traditional style of the village architecture has been lost. Xiaogaotian, of Luzigou Village, Shiping County, Yunnan, one of the third batch of national traditional villages, has seen good preservation of the traditional features with financial support from the state. The living environment has been improved, but due to inconvenient transportation, the industry has not been prosperous so far (Figure 3). Liangzishang Village in Maguan County, Yun-

nan, is not a national-level traditional village and should have been demolished and merged, but it has a good traditional appearance. A deputy director of the county civil affairs bureau took the initiative to go to the village to serve as the village chief, personally planning and guiding the protection, and used hundreds of thousands of yuan of the original relocation subsidy for repairs, thus preserving the traditional village. It is currently planning the path for further development.



Figure 2 The courtyard of a residential building in Ginkgo Village in Tengchong Figure



Figure 3 The appearance of Xiaogaotian in Luzigou Village in Shiping

(3) Villages that rely on external forces to promote protection and development. For example, Hexi Village in Xin County, Henan Province, used the conference to promote the protection and development of the village. Yunshang Pingtian Village in Songyang, Zhejiang, has leveraged the design influence of renowned architects, effectively preserving its traditional appearance while promoting the development of the village (Figure 4).

(4) Villages that rely on external forces but face an uncertain future. For example, in Damoyu Village on the outskirts of Kunming, a Shanghai woman entrepreneur has



created a homestay and promoted the concept of “sustainable living,” attracting a group of highly educated young people (mostly with master’s degrees or higher, some of whom are “returnees”) to build their “base” in the village. This has brought some recognition and benefits to an otherwise obscure village. However, it seems that there is a clear separation between the newcomers and the original villagers, with no integration of lifestyles or architectural styles. The future development of the village remains uncertain. Guanglang Village in Xishan, Kunming, is a hollowed-out village that has lost some of its traditional features. The village offered three years of free rent to attract people to start businesses, but after two years, there have been both successes and failures. The village has not been fully revitalized and is still under development, with its future prospects remaining uncertain.

(5) Villagesworth discussing. For example, the ancient Yi village of Leju in Xishan, Kunming, has long been hollowed out, but its traditional features still remain. A certain “tourism development company” (real estate) has been involved in its development for many years, but it still has limited appeal, and a small number of old houses have fallen into disrepair due to a lack of buyers (Figure 5). A new Yi village in a county in Sichuan was built on a nearby gentle slope due to relocation. However, due to time constraints, the village was hastily developed with several neat terraces, causing the planning itself to lose the organic, free-form spatial organization intrinsic to traditional Yi mountain settlements. The good economic conditions were not utilized to produce a quality project.

The author has made a statistical analysis of the above villages (Table 1), from which it can be seen that less

than half of them are currently well protected; currently, less than half of them are well developed; more than half rely on external forces to promote protection and development; some traditional villages have lost the protection of their traditional features during development; and some villages face uncertainties in their future protection and development. This shows how difficult it is to protect and develop traditional villages. Let me ask: Is the protection and development of traditional villages sustainable? Can what should be protected be protected?



Figure 4 The scenery of Yunshang Pingtian Village in Songyang



Figure 5 The hollowed-out appearance of the ancient Yi village of Leju in Xishan, Kunming

Table 1 Statistical analysis of the aforementioned villages

Region, village name		Analysis options	Traditional level	Present conservation status	Present development trend	Supporting force	Future protection trends	Future revitalization prospect
Yuanyang, Yunnan		Azheke Village	national	good	medium	outside	+	+
Tengchong, Yunnan		Ginkgo Village	national	medium	good	inside (outside)	+	+
Shuangjiang, Yunnan		Bingdao Village	national	poor	good	inside	-	+
Shiping, Yunnan		Xiaogaotian in Luzigou Village	national	good	poor	inside	+	?
Malong, Yunnan		Liangzishang Village	traditional village	medium	poor	inside	+	?
Kunming, Yunnan		Leju Ancient Yi Village	hollow village	medium	poor	outside	?	?
Kunming, Yunnan		Damoyu Village	common village	medium	medium	outside	?	?
Kunming, Yunnan		Guanglang Village	hollow village	medium	medium	outside	?	?

(Continued)

Region, village name		Analysis options	Traditional level	Present conservation status	Present development trend	Supporting force	Future protection trends	Future revitalization prospect
Xin County, Henan	Hexi Village		national	good	good	outside	+	+
Songyang, Zhejiang	Yunshang Pingtian Village		national	good	good	outside	+	+
Xiamen, Fujian	Yuanqian Community, Qingqiao Village		common village	good	good	inside (outside)	+	+
A county in Sichuan	Yi New Village		newly built Village	medium	medium	outside	+	+

**1.3 Statistical analysis of the author’s village surveys over the past twenty years**

The author began to conduct research on traditional dwellings in 1981, which, of course, included visits to rural villages. However, at first, he only focused on residential buildings and did not keep detailed records of the nearly 100 villages in and outside Yunnan Province in which he was involved. It was not until 2002 that the research gradually involved settlements, and he began to record them. I did not travel much from 2002 to 2006 and only visited 23 villages 32 times (9 of which were repeated); from 2007 onwards, my research involved more village planning, design, tourism, and other work. Especially after the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and three other departments issued the “Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Protection and Development of Traditional Villages” at the end of 2012, I came into contact with more villages and participated in some work practices. I visited 200 villages 318 times (118 of which were repeated).

For 223 villages that were surveyed 350 times (127 of which were repeated) between 2002 and January 2020, the author recently reviewed the records and photos, and made a preliminary compilation, analysis and subjective judgment (based on the time of the surveys). (Table 2) The following data were obtained through statistics: 92 villages were protected well, accounting for 41.3%, and 31 villages were developed well (also protected well), accounting for 13.9%. The classification of “good,” “medium,” and “poor” for protection and development is based solely on the author’s subjective and experiential judgment. The criteria include the village’s environmental appearance, cultural connotations, authenticity and integrity of preservation, regional or ethnic characteristics of traditional residences, housing quality, the state of appearance preservation, the current economic level of the village, industrial status, and the wealth disparity among villagers. No quantitative indicators are used, and it may not be scientific or entirely accurate, but it can serve as a relative reference.

**Table 2 Personal statistical analysis report on village field surveys (partial)**

Time	Place	Village	Ethnic group	Level	Village style	Architecture style	Development status	Economic level	Other	Overall evaluation	Remark
2007. 3.19	Lanping, Yunnan	Luogujing	Pumi	traditional	good	medium	poor	poor		✓	plan
4.15	Anhui, Huangshan	Hong		national famous village	good	good	good	rich		★	
7.23	Hancheng, Shaanxi	Dangjia		traditional	good	good	poor	rich		✓	
7.25	Mizhi, Shaanxi	Liujiamao Jiang’s Manor		traditional	good	good	medium	rich		✓	
8.26	Jinghong, Yunnan	Manjingfa	Dai	newly-built	medium	good	good	rich		✓	participate
2008. 4.27	Jinghong, Yunnan	(Manjingfa)	—	—	—	—	—	—			
	Chengzizhai	Dai	traditional	medium	medium	poor	medium			plan	
	Manbianzhai	Dai	traditional	medium	medium	poor	medium				

(Continued)

Time	Place	Village	Ethnic group	Level	Village style	Architecture style	Development status	Economic level	Other	Overall evaluation	Remark
4.28	Menglun, Yunnan	Manzhazhai	Dai	traditional	medium	medium	poor	medium			
4.29	Mengla, Yunnan	Manlongdai	Dai	traditional	good	good	poor	medium		✓	plan
		Mangana	Dai	traditional	good	good	poor	medium		✓	plan
4.30	Mengla, Yunnan	Mefen, Mandong	Dai	traditional	good	good	poor	medium		✓	plan
9.3	Yunnan, Menglun	(Manzhazhai)	—	—	—	—	—	—			
		(Chengzizhai)	—	—	—	—	—	—			
11.23	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Xiaozhou		traditional	good	good	medium	rich		✓	
2010.10.13	Rongcheng, Shandong	Weiwei Village, Gangxi Town		traditional	medium	good	poor	medium	seaweed house	✓	
10.16	Zhangqiu, Shandong	Zhujiayu Ancient Village		traditional	good	good	medium	medium	600 years	✓	
11.20-22	Datian, Fujian	Fanglian Fort, Taian Fort, Guangchong Fort, Pipa Fort, Longquan Fort, Tancheng Fort, Anzhen Fort, Fengyang Fort, Anliang Fort, Fulin Fort, Gangling Fort		traditional	good	good	poor	poor	earthen fort	6✓	
2011.3.26	Liuku, Yunnan	Dishuihe	Lisu	traditional	medium	poor	poor	poor			plan
		Xinjian	Nu, Lisu	newly-built	medium	poor	poor	poor			design
10.21	Lancang, Yunnan (Jingmai Mountain)	Manggeng	Dai	traditional	medium	medium	medium	medium			
		Mengben	Dai	traditional	medium	medium	medium	medium			
		Jingmai Dazhai	Dai	traditional	poor	medium	medium	medium			
		Nuogan	Dai	national	good	good	good	medium		★	plan
		Manghong	Blang	traditional	medium	medium	medium	medium			
		Mangjing Shangzhai	Blang	national	medium	medium	medium	medium			
		Mangjing Xiazhai	Blang	national	medium	medium	medium	medium			
Wengji Village	Blang	national	good	good	good	medium		★	plan		
11.4	Minqing, Fujian	Xinhu Village Honglincuo		traditional	good	good	medium	medium	Ancient buildings	✓	

From the above data, we can see that the proportion of villages that are wellprotected is relatively small, about 2/5; the proportion of villages that are well developed is even smaller, less than 1/7. Although these figures were based on evaluations from past surveys, and the number of

nationally designated traditional villages in China has since reached 6,819, the overall situation remains far from optimistic. After all, these protected villages account for merely about 0.3% of all villages nationwide. Moreover, my surveys typically focused on those with distinctive

features and relatively better conditions. It is thus evident how formidable the task of rural revitalization truly is. So, why is it difficult? What's the difficulty? What are the specific difficulties in protecting and developing traditional villages?

## 2 Reconsidering the protection and development of traditional villages under the rural revitalization strategy

### 2.1 Further understanding of the difficulty of protecting and developing traditional villages

The difficulty of rural revitalization has been pointed out in various central government documents over the years: "At present, the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development in my country is most prominent in rural areas"[6]; "We should be soberly aware that the current situation of poor foundation, thin resources and lagging development of my country's agriculture and rural areas has not fundamentally changed. The most obvious shortcoming in economic and social development is still in the 'three rural issues,' and the weakest link in modernization construction is still agriculture and rural areas." [7] This year, the Central No. 1 Document again clearly pointed out that "the prominent shortcomings in the 'three rural issues' must be addressed to achieve a well-off society in all respects." [8] The manifestations of these shortcomings have been addressed in a macro perspective in these documents.

Villages are the most basic units of rural areas. For the millions of villages across the country, there are numerous issues: too many debts, poor infrastructure, a shortage of talent, limited public services, low income levels, weak grassroots management capabilities, and so on. The disparity between urban and rural areas is significant, which represents the common challenges of rural revitalization.

The protection and development of traditional villages is essentially an important aspect of the concrete manifestation of rural revitalization. Its main challenges are that protection is difficult, development is difficult, and achieving both protection and development is even more

difficult. Difficulties in protection include a lack of recognition of value, a lack of awareness of protection, a lack of protection funds, and a lack of technical guidance for protection. Difficulties in development: difficulty in industry selection, including problems with funding, technology, and market. The fundamental difficulty lies in the lack of talent and leadership. In places like Yuanjia Village in Xi'an and Yuanqian Community in Xiamen, the presence of strong leaders has made it possible to find solutions to these challenges.

The author would like to point out here that there are some impoverished traditional villages that are the most difficult to deal with, and this is particularly prominent in the western and mountainous areas of China. The reasons for their poverty are inconvenient transportation, worse infrastructure, a weaker economy, less income, lower living standards, and dilapidated houses, and there has historically been little attention and investment in them. Currently, the "poverty alleviation" plans in various places have been implemented for specific people and households; however, how to get rid of poverty for the entire village, how to develop and become rich, and how to revitalize the village are challenging issues that cannot yield immediate results. They are often truly traditional villages, and it is precisely because of their poverty and difficulty in development that many of their traditional elements have been preserved to this day. The author has always advocated that poverty-stricken traditional villages should be included in specialized research, with specific protection and development strategies, offering "special attention" (through special markers), "special measures" (by formulating specific policies), and "special funds" (through the establishment of dedicated funds) [9]. These villages should not be treated with a one-size-fits-all approach of "relocation." Even in the case of relocation, traditional villages with rich cultural connotations and excellent forms should not simply be dismantled but can be utilized.

This involves the specific problem of "hollow villages." The hollowing out of villages is a pain point in rural areas today, but it is also an inevitable phenomenon in the process of urbanization. The phenomenon of "hollow vil-

lages” should be treated differently: hollow villages formed by the purposeful and planned demolition and merging of villages due to urbanization can be demolished to free up land; hollow traditional villages with preservation value can be transformed and utilized; we oppose the artificial creation of hollow villages for the sake of “development” interests, and even if “limited vacating” is involved, the wishes and interests of the original villagers must be fully respected; the most positive way is to allow people to return to the villages through rural revitalization and avoid hollow villages.

## 2.2 Dialectical thinking on the sustainability of traditional village protection and development

“Implementing the rural revitalization strategy is an effective way to inherit China’s excellent traditional culture. Chinese civilization is rooted in the farming culture, and rural communities are the basic carriers of Chinese civilization.”[7] Traditional villages “carry the essence of Chinese traditional culture,” “embody the spirit of the Chinese nation,” and “preserve the diversity of national culture.”[10] The significance of protecting and developing traditional villages is already very clear. However, whether in theory or practice, the issue of sustainability in their protection and development frequently arises.

People often ask: Can traditional villages be preserved forever? Can traditional dwellings be preserved in the long term? Will intangible cultural heritage, such as primitive sacrificial activities, still exist in the future? Different people, scholars from different disciplines, and different viewpoints may have different answers to these questions. The author’s thoughts on this are as follows:

Tradition is a kind of cultural accumulation. It is not empty. Various cultural traditions (regional, national, material, and non-material) have their own forms that are recognized by people after being continuously inherited and accumulated over a considerable period of history. The traditional villages and traditional dwellings in various places are a kind of material cultural heritage. Their traditions have their own specific material forms, such as the “comb-style” layout of villages in Guangdong, the earthen buildings and village fortresses in Fujian, the “Siheyuan”

dwellings in Beijing, the stilt-style “bamboo houses” of the Dai people in Xishuangbanna, etc. Without these specific forms, they would no longer resemble their traditional characteristics. However, the traditional form is not static. It changes over time. It is a gradual change rather than a sudden change. The traditional dwellings we see in various places today are by no means the most primitive cave dwellings or tree dwellings. They are all relics from the previous historical period that have undergone development and changes for countless generations. Take the traditional “bamboo houses” of the Dai people in Xishuangbanna as an example. The first generation was made of real bamboo and grass (1950s-1970s), the second generation was made of wood instead of bamboo (1980s-1990s), the third generation was made of reinforced concrete (from the end of the last century to the present), and the fourth generation is the emerging light steel, plastic board, and prefabricated “bamboo houses” (from the 2010s to the present). Although the materials are constantly changing (forced), they all retain certain traditional morphological elements (the ground floor is elevated or partially elevated, and the hip roof is built), and people still call it a “bamboo house.” (Even though the first generation of real bamboo houses can no longer be seen today), this proves that people today recognize that it is inheriting traditions, and that after a certain period of time in the future, it may become the Dai “traditional dwellings” of that era.[11] (Figure 6) The same is true for traditional villages. No village remains unchanged, and they need revitalization. As long as it changes gradually along the traditional trajectory within a certain range, rather than undergoing sudden changes such as major changes, demolition, or construction, it should be allowed to meet the needs of modern life development while preserving and improving traditional forms and elements. For this reason, I have always been against designating some villages where villagers still live (including their houses, of course) as “national protected areas” and requiring that their renovation must be in accordance with regulations and “one house, one map” like cultural relics (palaces, temples, ancient buildings). This is unrealistic. Dwellings are “people’s residences,” and villages are the material environ-



ment where people live. They all fall into the category of those in need of revitalization. “Nationally protected” cultural relics cannot be “revitalized.”

Based on the above understanding, the author believes that the protection and development of traditional villages are sustainable as long as their protection is not regarded as “unchanging.” Take Azheke Village as an example. As long as the Honghe Hani Rice Terraces World Cultural Heritage exists, the village, which is one of the “four elements (forest, water system, village, and terraces)” that form a unified structure, will inevitably remain. In the future, the methods of production in the terraces may improve, and the number, composition, and form of villages in the core area may change. However, there must always be traditional villages that reflect the original methods of production and their elements. Traditional villages like Azheke, which have been well-preserved to this day, will be the top choice. However, fifty years from now, Azheke will certainly not be exactly the same as it is today. The hope is that it will follow the traditional trajectory, allowing the value of tradition to be passed on and sustained through gradual change. The same is true for traditional dwellings, such as mushroom houses. As a unique traditional architectural culture, there should

be a very small number of truly authentic prototypes preserved as specimens (Azheke Village is most likely to become its inheritance site). They may become cultural relics in the future, no longer serving or primarily serving as residences with living functions. Their long-term protection still needs policy support and technical support to increase protection efforts. As residential mushroom houses, they will inevitably disappear in the face of reality (this is already the reality, as roof thatch is difficult to find). In order to inherit this unique architectural cultural tradition, we only hope to explore in an orderly manner new “mushroom houses” that can meet the requirements of new lifestyles, new materials, and new technologies. As for the Hani people’s intangible cultural heritage, such as “mopi” (equivalent to a priest) and primitive sacrificial activities, as there are fewer and fewer elderly inheritors and young people are not interested in them, their traditional sacrificial rituals can probably only be recorded in documents, film and television materials and preserved in museums; and as part of the national traditional culture, its connotations such as “respect for nature” must, of course, be passed on, and new forms of expression may emerge: either integrated into ethnic festivals or reflected in literary and artistic works such as songs and dances.



Figure 6 The first, second, third, and fourth generations of the Dai bamboo houses in Xishuangbanna

Let traditional villages and traditional dwellings be protected during development and their value be passed on. By dialectically handling the relationship between protection and development, such protection and development can be sustainable, as past traditions have been passed down through development.

### 2.3 Internal and external reflections on the driving force of traditional village protection and development

“When the rural areas prosper, the country prospers;

when the rural areas decline, the country declines. The contradiction between the growing needs of our people for a better life and the unbalanced and inadequate development is most prominent in rural areas. The fact that our country is still in the primary stage of socialism and will remain in this stage for a long time is largely reflected in rural areas.”[7] It can be seen that solving the urban-rural disparity is one of the important starting points of the rural revitalization strategy. In the past, rural areas supported

the industrial development of cities, and now rural revitalization also needs the support of cities. The involvement of outside personnel and funds today is a concrete manifestation of this.

Rural revitalization has long required such support and external intervention. The progress of the protection and development of local traditional villages has proved that this external force is indispensable. It includes two aspects: financial resources and human resources (including intelligence, technology, and management), and human resources are more important than financial resources. The purpose of external intervention is, of course, to assist in rural revitalization. While future returns from financial investment and the benefits of intellectual contributions cannot be ruled out, if the latter takes precedence, it will inevitably lead to negative consequences. There are indeed examples where excessive pursuit of profits has resulted in the destruction of traditional villages. From recent experiences in various regions, the ways external forces intervene in traditional villages are as follows: For financial intervention, small-scale support is more effective than large-scale development, as it is more stable and less likely to cause negative damage (ideally, an endogenous development model should be used); for human resources intervention, long-term involvement is better than short-term, and hands-on work is more effective than merely offering advice or consultation. Support for specific projects has a greater impact than simply doing planning. Given the arduousness and long-term nature of rural revitalization, external intervention should establish a long-term mechanism, which requires policy support and organized guidance. Our colleges and universities and planning and design departments should also transform their current enthusiasm for traditional villages into institutional support for the rural revitalization strategy, and study specific measures for this purpose, such as long-term and short-term talent training, the setting up of majors and courses, the long-term, targeted and effective nature of rural research projects, the establishment of a system of village planners and architects, etc.

However, the main focus of rural revitalization is rural affairs, the object is the farmers, and the masters are the villagers; today and in the future, the residents, practitioners, managers, and beneficiaries of rural areas are mainly local villagers. Although it is not ruled out that there may be immigrants from cities in the future, they cannot “usurp the role of the hosts.” Villagers are not only the masters of the rural economy and the protagonists of rural society but also the carriers and inheritors of rural traditional culture. Therefore, they are the real internal driving force for rural revitalization. Rural revitalization will only be hopeful and sustainable if it relies mainly on internal forces and is supplemented by external forces. Due to historical reasons, educational factors, and other factors, the current reality of China’s rural areas is that their internal strength is very weak. This is one of the important reasons for the “lagging development,” “weakness,” and “shortcomings” of today’s rural areas, and it is also an important factor contributing to the arduousness of rural revitalization. Take today’s “poverty alleviation” as an example. Without the mobilization and growth of internal strength, the support can only be temporary and cannot last permanently. This is a common consensus and concern shared by many today. Therefore, in the core components of rural revitalization—“industry, talent, culture, ecology, and organization”—talent revitalization has been placed in an important position.

Regarding talent revitalization, various central documents have provided plans and guiding opinions. The author has learned from personal experience that the key to rural talent revitalization lies in education. First, we must thoroughly change the current backward situation of rural basic education. This is a long-term fundamental task and an urgent task. Second, we will continue to carry out education and training in various forms to improve the quality of villagers and promote civilized rural customs. Third, educational institutions should continuously cultivate practical management and technical talents for rural areas, and colleges and universities, especially vocational higher education, should assume their due responsibilities in this regard. Fourth, we must be good at discovering and culti-

vating village leaders. This is not only necessary to reflect the leadership role of the Party but also the key to the protection and development of traditional villages.

The task of the rural revitalization strategy is arduous, and the protection and development of traditional villages is a long-term and challenging journey. We can only continue to research, rethink, and practice with our utmost efforts.

### Sources of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Photographed by Zhang Pan.

Figure 3: Photographed by Yang Hongmei.

The rest of the figures and tables were photographed and drawn by the author.

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