



**INTEGRATED RURAL TOURISM STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION IN TRADITIONAL VILLAGES OF
YUNNAN, CHINA**

By

YANG YIRAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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May 2024

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May 2024

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The cultural landscape of traditional Chinese villages holds significant value in preserving national identity and promoting Chinese culture. Rural revitalisation is currently a robust development strategy being implemented in China, with a specific focus on cultural landscape issues. The primary goals of the strategy are enhancing national cultural confidence, safeguarding and utilising cultural heritage, and achieving sustainable development. However, the number of traditional villages is rapidly declining, and the conflict between protection and development is becoming increasingly apparent. Moreover, existing policies and theories are not being effectively implemented. Therefore, it is essential to conduct in-depth research on the sustainable development of cultural landscapes from multiple perspectives. To this end, this study aimed to explore the sustainable development strategy of cultural landscapes in traditional tourism villages in Shaxi Town, Yunnan Province, in response to the issues faced by the site. Specifically, this study's objectives were to: (i) identify the

challenges related to the sustainable development of cultural landscapes in traditional tourism villages in Shaxi Town; (ii) discover the factors influencing the sustainable development of cultural landscapes in traditional tourism villages in Shaxi Town; and (iii) develop a comprehensive framework for the sustainable development of cultural landscapes in traditional tourism villages in Shaxi Town. This study selected six traditional tourism villages in Shaxi Town, Yunnan, as research cases. These villages possess rich cultural landscapes, with Sideng Village being particularly noteworthy. As the only surviving market on the Tea Horse Ancient Road, Sideng Village holds immense cultural heritage value. Based on the perspectives of constructivism and the theory of rural integration, the qualitative method was employed in this study to collect data through in-depth interviews, observations, and text analysis. The research data were analysed using thematic analysis and triangulation. This study's findings reveal the complex challenges, influencing factors, and strategies related to effectively preserving and developing cultural landscapes in traditional villages. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers, landscape planners, and developers in order for them to protect the cultural landscape of traditional villages while formulating tourism development strategies. By implementing the study's recommendations, tourism-based traditional villages in Yunnan Province can promote sustainable tourism development, contribute to rural revitalisation, safeguard their heritage, and utilise their cultural landscapes.

Keywords: Cultural landscape, Integration rural tourism, Strategies, Sustainable development, Traditional villages

SDG: GOAL 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KAJIAN KE ATAS STRATEGI PELANCONGAN LUAR BANDAR
BERSEPADU UNTUK PEMULIHARAAN LANDSKAP BUDAYA DI
PERKAMPUNGAN TRADISIONAL YUNNAN, CHINA**

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Landskap budaya perkampungan tradisional Cina memegang nilai penting dalam memelihara identiti nasional dan mempromosikan budaya Cina. Penjana semula luar bandar kini dilaksanakan sebagai strategi pembangunan teguh di China, dengan tumpuan khusus pada isu landskap budaya. Matlamat utama strategi ini adalah meningkatkan keyakinan budaya nasional, melindungi dan menggunakan warisan budaya, dan mencapai pembangunan lestari. Walaubagaimanapun, bilangan perkampungan tradisional semakin berkurangan, dan konflik antara perlindungan dan pembangunan semakin ketara. Selain itu, dasar dan teori sedia ada tidak dilaksanakan dengan berkesan. Oleh itu, adalah wajib untuk membuat penyelidikan mendalam tentang pembangunan lestari landskap budaya dari pelbagai perspektif. Untuk tujuan ini, kajian ini bermatlamat untuk meneroka strategi pembangunan lestari landskap budaya di perkampungan pelancongan tradisional di Pekan Shaxi, Wilayah Yunnan, sebagai tindak

balas kepada isu yang dihadapi oleh tapak tersebut. Secara khususnya, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk: (i) mengenal pasti cabaran berkaitan pembangunan lestari landskap budaya di perkampungan pelancongan tradisional di Pekan Shaxi; (ii) menemui faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pembangunan lestari landskap budaya di perkampungan pelancongan tradisional di Pekan Shaxi; dan (iii) membangunkan rangka kerja komprehensif untuk pembangunan lestari landskap budaya di perkampungan pelancongan tradisional di Pekan Shaxi. Penyelidikan ini memilih enam perkampungan pelancongan tradisional di Pekan Shaxi, Yunnan, sebagai kes kajian. Perkampungan ini mempunyai landskap budaya yang kaya, di mana Kampung Sideng khususnya menarik perhatian. Sebagai satu-satunya pasar di Tea Horse Ancient Road yang masih bertahan, Kampung Sideng memiliki nilai warisan budaya yang sangat besar. Berdasarkan perspektif konstruktivisme dan teori integrasi luar bandar, kaedah kualitatif digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk mengumpul data melalui temu bual mendalam, pemerhatian, dan analisis teks. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan kaedah analisis tematik dan triangulasi. Dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan cabaran rumit, faktor berpengaruh, dan strategi berkaitan dengan memelihara dan membangunkan landskap budaya secara efektif di perkampungan tradisional. Hasilnya memberi pandangan berharga kepada penggubal dasar, perancang landskap, dan pemaaju agar mereka dapat melindungi landskap budaya perkampungan tradisional ketika merangka strategi pembangunan pelancongan. Dengan melaksanakan cadangan kajian, perkampungan tradisional berasaskan pelancongan di Wilayah Yunnan boleh menggalakkan pembangunan pelancongan yang lestari, menyumbang kepada pemulihan

luar bandar, melindungi warisan perkampungan, dan memanfaatkan landskap budaya perkampungan.

Kata Kunci: Lanskap budaya, Integrasi pelancongan luar bandar, Strategi, Pembangunan mampan, Kampung tradisional

SDG: MATLAMAT 11: Bandar dan komuniti mampan



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into nine sections. The initial section outlines the structure of this chapter. Subsequently, the second section offers a concise background to the research. The third section presents the scope of the study. Moving forward, the fourth section discusses the problem of the study. Then, in section five, the key questions of this study are addressed. The sixth section sets out the objectives of the study in line with the research questions. The seventh section highlights the significance of this study. The eighth section then provides basic definitions of key terms used in this thesis. Lastly, the ninth section concludes with a summary.

1.2 Research Background

Rural Revitalisation

China, rooted in its ancient farming culture, has preserved a substantial wealth of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Given that China's significant cultural landscapes have deep roots in traditional villages, the preservation and utilisation of these villages have garnered widespread attention across society. This issue extends beyond the preservation of China's traditional cultural diversity; it also impacts the success of rural reconstruction and development, consequently influencing the balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural areas throughout China's modernisation process (Pan & Yan, 2021).

Since 2013, General Secretary Xi Jinping has consistently advocated, during the Central Rural Work Conference and various visits and research trips, for the preservation, development, and enrichment of rural heritage, emphasising the path to cultural prosperity in rural areas. The 2017 report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) also stressed the importance of safeguarding and utilising rural cultural landscapes as a vital component of rural revitalisation (Xi, 2019).

In February 2018, the government outlined its intentions in the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council's No. 1 document titled "Opinions on the Implementation of the Rural Revitalisation Strategy." The document called for the effective preservation and reasonable utilisation of outstanding agricultural cultural heritage, safeguarding heritage sites, traditional villages, ethnic communities, traditional architecture, and other legacies. It also voiced support for the continued inheritance of exceptional ethnic minority cultures, folk traditions, and other rural cultures (Xi, 2018). This document, serving as an action plan for rural revitalisation (Liu, 2018), not only guides the cultural development of traditional villages but also acts as a catalyst for their cultural growth.

The 'Recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Formulation of the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Visionary Goals for the 2035 Period,' adopted by the Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee of the CPC on 29 October 2020, included 15 recommendations.

The ninth recommendation emphasises the prosperous development of cultural initiatives and the cultural industry to enhance the nation's cultural soft power (NDRC, 2020).

At the national strategic level, addressing the ongoing three rural issues has consistently been a key focus of the CPC. The government aims to promote urban-rural integration, initiate pertinent reforms, and optimise policy measures through the rural revitalisation strategy to stimulate the comprehensive development of agriculture and rural areas (see Table 1.1). For modern villages, their core and rich cultural heritage are rooted in traditional village culture. This culture serves not only as a critical pillar of rural governance but also as a significant source of national cultural confidence. The inheritance of outstanding traditional village culture offers clear guidance and fresh perspectives for safeguarding and nurturing traditional village cultural landscapes.

Table 1.1 : Implementation Plan for Rural Revitalisation Strategy

Time	Main Content	Core points
Oct 2017	The General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the "Rural Revitalisation Strategy" in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China	Green Development Cultural Prosperity Quality Prosperity of Agriculture
Jan 2018	Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Implementing the Rural Revitalisation Strategy	Improve the quality of agricultural development, promote green development in rural areas, and prosper rural culture
May 2018	Review of the National Rural Revitalisation Strategic Plan (2018-2020)	Industrial prosperity, ecological livability, rural civilisation, effective governance, and a prosperous life
Sep 2018	Issuing the National Rural Revitalisation Strategic Plan (2018-2020)	Economic construction, political construction, cultural construction, social construction, ecological civilisation construction, and the construction of the CPC
Feb 2021	Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalisation and Accelerating Agricultural and Rural Modernisation	Agriculture is high-quality and efficient, rural areas are liveable and suitable for work, and farmers are prosperous
Feb 2022	Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Doing a Good Job in the Key Work of Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalisation in 2022	Stable and increased agricultural production, steady increase in farmers' income, and stable and peaceful rural areas
Mar 2022	Premier Li Keqiang's Government Work Report (Support the development of characteristic industries in poverty-stricken areas and initiate rural construction actions)	Economic recovery and development have been maintained, innovation capabilities have been further enhanced, reform and opening up have been continuously deepened, ecological civilisation construction has been continuously promoted, and people's living standards have steadily improved
Mar 2022	Implementation Plan for Rural Construction Action	Bottom-up, villagers' autonomy, and farmers' participation

(Source: Chinese government website)

Yunnan Province, renowned for its rich ethnic cultural resources and diverse cultural characteristics, has encountered challenges posed by factors such as modernisation, urbanisation, and marketisation in preserving, inheriting, and innovating traditional ethnic cultures. However, spurred by the rural revitalisation strategy, Yunnan Province has initiated a process of gradual adjustment and modernisation of its implementation strategies (see Table 1.2). In the context of the province's rural revitalisation efforts, the 'war on poverty' has achieved significant success since 2015, resulting in a reduction of the poverty-stricken population from 4.71 million to zero by 18 April 2016.

In 2021, the emphasis in addressing the 'Three Rural Issues' began gradually shifting from 'poverty alleviation' to 'rural revitalisation.' In February 2021, during the Fourth Session of the 13th Yunnan Provincial People's Congress, a plan was adopted to implement a 'one million' demonstration project for rural revitalisation. This initiative places a primary focus on creating 'beautiful villages,' with the ultimate aim of contributing to the construction of a 'beautiful Yunnan' (Wang,2022). Within this programme, traditional villages have been identified as the primary focal point and target for 'beautiful village' construction.

Table 1.2 : Yunnan Province's Rural Revitalisation

Time	Main Content	Core points
Feb 2019	Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalisation in Yunnan Province (2018-2022)	The comprehensive promotion of modern agriculture with plateau characteristics, the initial formation of a pattern of integrated development of three industries, the further consolidation of achievements in poverty alleviation, the continuous improvement of rural infrastructure conditions, the acceleration of the construction of ecologically livable and beautiful rural areas, the initial establishment of a system and mechanism for urban-rural integrated development, and the inheritance and development of excellent traditional rural culture
Jun 2021	Implementation Opinions of the Communist Party of China Yunnan Provincial Committee and Yunnan Provincial People's Government on Promoting Rural Revitalisation and Accelerating Agricultural and Rural Modernisation	Significant progress has been made in the modernisation of agriculture and rural areas, the modernisation of agricultural infrastructure has reached a new level, the convenience of rural living facilities has been preliminarily realized, and the level of equalisation of basic public services between urban and rural areas has significantly improved
Apr 2022	Implementation Opinions of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Yunnan Provincial People's Government on Doing a Good Job in the Key Work of Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalisation in 2022	Consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation and promote farmers' income growth, effectively strengthen the protection and construction of arable land, lead agricultural modernisation with agricultural industrialisation and agricultural technology, promote stable and sustainable development of rural areas, steadily promote rural construction, and increase policy guarantees and institutional mechanism innovation efforts

(Source: Yunnan Provincial People's Government Network)

When it comes to town-level implementation, The Jianchuan County People's Government is actively championing initiatives like the 'Shaxi Characteristic Town' (Qin et al., 2022) (September 6,2022). Consequently, Shaxi Town has achieved remarkable milestones through the establishment of specialty

villages. In 2017, Shaxi Town received the prestigious nomination prize for being the 'First Yunnan Culture and Tourism Integration Demonstration Scenic Spot.' Subsequently, in 2018, it earned the esteemed title of 'China's Top 100 Beautiful Rural Villages' and was recognised as the 'Most Beautiful Small Town in China.' Furthermore, in April 2021, Shaxi Town was honoured as a 'Yunnan Provincial Characteristic Town ' by the Yunnan Provincial Government.

Presently, Shaxi Tourism Zone's development strategy is centred around Shideng Village as its core area, with plans to extend its reach to neighboring villages such as Jiangchangping Village, Zhongdeng Village, Long'e Village, Shilong Village, and more. This expansion will establish a regional tourism pattern known as the 'one centre, one loop' model. This comprehensive approach to tourism development, known as the 'Dashaxi' regional tourism development plan, will significantly bolster rural revitalisation efforts and promote more efficient village development (Wu, 2022).

Traditional Villages

Ancient villages in China, often referred to as traditional villages, were primarily established before the Ming Dynasty. Over centuries of historical development, human societies have created and left behind a substantial reservoir of tangible and intangible cultural heritage within these villages (Liu et al., 2020). Despite the passage of time and historical transformations, these villages have largely preserved their original architectural and landscape features, making them valuable repositories of China's agricultural heritage.

The villages are rich in cultural and natural resources, serving as historical records, exhibiting diverse cultural landscapes, and possessing significant historical, cultural, scientific, artistic, economic, and social conservation value. Traditional village cultural landscapes represent not only the accumulation of material and spiritual wealth but also repositories of intertwined history and culture, carrying profound historical and cultural significance. Ultimately, traditional villages are a reflection of the deep roots of the Chinese nation (Hu et al., 2014) and Serve as China's invaluable cultural heritage.

Traditional villages have historically faced economic challenges, as long-term imbalances in development have hindered their ability to protect and maintain these cultural landscapes. Despite such economic constraints, China's traditional villages have developed diverse and distinctive cultural landscapes due to their unique geographical conditions, abundant natural resources, and distinct social patterns. Each of these landscapes possesses its own cultural characteristics and unique allure. The cultural landscape of traditional villages emerges from the interplay of natural and human factors across historical periods, forming a complex tapestry of regional attributes unique to traditional villages. These attributes manifest not only in material aspects, such as settlement-centred living spaces, agriculture-dominated production areas, and ecological spaces integrated with the natural environment, but also in various intangible forms, including local customs, festivals, and other cultural traits (Wang et al., 2006).

Traditional villages have been bestowed with enduring conservation and application value by virtue of their exceptional cultural and historical importance. Simultaneously, they constitute a pivotal component of the rural revitalisation strategy, bridging the past with the future (Hu et al., 2014). However, the rapid development of modern cities and imbalances in urban-rural growth patterns have heightened expectations among rural populations for urban life, leading to significant rural depopulation and the gradual decline of many villages. Consequently, the implementation of the rural revitalisation strategy holds immense importance in rejuvenating villages and arresting their ongoing decline.

Nonetheless, China is currently undergoing rapid urbanisation, even affecting traditional villages nestled in remote, centuries-old mountainous regions, resulting in profound transformations (Sun, 2017). The preservation and development of cultural landscapes in traditional villages are integral to the rural revitalisation effort (Sun et al., 2019). However, this endeavor currently faces a multitude of challenges, which are discussed further below:

i. Population Migration

In China, as reforms in household registration, the rural land system, and social security deepen, migrant workers are gradually transitioning into urban citizens. The results of the seventh national population census conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on 1 November 2020 revealed that the urban resident population stood at approximately 901.99 million, constituting 63.89% of the total population. Meanwhile, the rural resident population

numbered around 509.79 million, making up 36.11% of the total population. Compared to the sixth national census in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), the urban population saw a significant increase of 236.41 million. This shift can be attributed to the abundant employment opportunities and the quality of education and healthcare services available in urban areas.

ii. Spatial Integration of Land

With the rapid pace of urbanisation, China's urban and rural spatial agglomeration and development patterns are becoming more defined and optimised. According to statistics, the number of cities, towns, and built-up areas has steadily increased, with the built-up area growing more than fourfold compared to the early stages of reform and opening-up (Zhou et al., 2021). This trend continues to manifest to varying degrees in the present day. However, certain challenges are associated with this development, such as rapid urbanisation and land expansion leading to suboptimal land utilisation. Agricultural land that was originally suitable for cultivation has been repurposed for construction. Simultaneously, the dynamics of human-land relationships in rural areas have become more pronounced due to population concentration in urban centres.

iii. Economic Upgrade

China's urbanisation has not only fostered economic diversification, complexity, sophistication, and expansion but has also guided the nation toward a gradual transition from an agricultural to an urban-based economy. This transformation has significantly reshaped the income structure of farmers

(Su & Wei, 2018). Specifically, the array of employment opportunities and higher income levels available in urban areas have made income derived from migrant Labour or part-time work the primary income source for many rural families. This shift has triggered a substantial migration of rural Labour to towns and cities, resulting in a Labour shortage in rural areas that impacts agricultural production.

iv. Social Reconstruction

With urbanisation and economic development, the social structure of traditional villages is undergoing a profound transformation. These villages are shifting from a state characterised by closure, homogeneity, and rigidity to one marked by openness, diversity, and mobility (Luo, 2017). This gradual transformation of rural society is evolving from a stable agrarian ritual society grounded in blood and geographic ties to a modern juridical and economic society (Fei, 2018). This shift entails significant alterations in the lifestyles, attitudes, and sources of income for rural residents. While it presents challenges for villages, such as preserving traditional culture and harmonising modernisation with ecological and environmental protection, it also offers villages improved opportunities for development.

vi. Cultural Renaissance

While the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of traditional villages has received some level of protection, they continue to confront challenges emanating from urbanisation, modernisation, and foreign influences. Striking a harmonious balance between preservation and development, inheritance

and innovation, and fostering the revitalisation of village culture remains an ongoing challenge to be addressed (Huang, 2012).

vii. Management of Change

Factors such as population movements and social reconfiguration have impacted the economic foundation and governance capacity of rural areas, resulting in a notably decline in governance capacity (Hu et al., 2017). Achieving village autonomy that respects the will of villagers and acknowledges their central role in shaping their interests requires concerted efforts and practical implementation.

In contemporary times, driven by tourism-related policies and the evolving economic and social landscape, tourism has emerged as a pivotal catalyst for regional economic growth. Traditional villages in China provide a compelling illustration of this transformation, as these culturally rich landscapes are progressively evolving into cultural tourism villages, representing a fusion of tourism development and traditional village life.

As of 2021, China boasts 6,819 traditional villages designated for key protection (Traditional village, 2021). Nevertheless, these villages have, for various reasons, suffered varying degrees of degradation. The preservation and rejuvenation of these villages hold immense value in safeguarding and transmitting cultural heritage.

Traditional villages have, indeed, become highly valuable yet delicate cultural landscape resources (Zou et al., 2020). Consider Yunnan Province, known for its abundant resources, including unique natural landscapes, diverse ethnic cultures, and a favourable ecological environment. Yunnan Province currently stands as China's province with the highest number of ethnic minorities, housing a total of 52 distinct ethnic groups, 25 of which have populations exceeding 5,000, and 15 of these ethnic groups are exclusive to Yunnan (November 2, 2022).

Yunnan's rich and diverse ethnic cultures, ancient architecture, and intangible cultural heritage collectively contribute to its unique historical and cultural significance. However, in the contemporary era of social development, with the rapid pace of urbanisation and continuous technological advancements, traditional cultures and their carriers have experienced shifts or declines in the face of modernisation's influence. Consequently, the number of traditional villages has significantly diminished. In Yunnan, owing to its remote geographical location, complex terrain, and relatively slower economic development, the impact of modernisation has been comparatively limited, and the pace of urbanisation has been gradual. Thus, the original character of these villages has been better preserved (Hu et al., 2017). According to the notice of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and other departments on the publication of the sixth batch of the list of Chinese traditional villages (Jiancun [2023] No. 16), Yunnan Province has made remarkable progress since the declaration of Chinese traditional villages was launched in 2012. As of March 2023, a total of 777 villages in Yunnan have

been included in the list of Chinese traditional villages, ranking first in the country and accounting for 9.5% of the national total (19 March 2023).

In the context of Yunnan's traditional villages, which serve as border spaces where diverse ethnic cultures converge, cultural tourism assumes a pivotal role. It not only positively impacts regional economic development but also holds significant implications for ecological environmental preservation and the appreciation of cultural heritage values (Zhai et al., 2020). However, the development of cultural tourism presents a double-edged sword. While it promotes local economic growth, it has also brought about certain adverse effects on local cultural landscapes. As an essential cultural tourism resource, developed by local government agencies, this sector has, at times, led to cultural distortions, environmental degradation, and uneven distribution of tourism resources during its expansion (Zhou, 2020).

In this context, achieving a delicate equilibrium between tourism development in traditional villages and the preservation of their cultural landscapes is of paramount importance. It is imperative to explore strategies to maintain the authenticity and integrity of these cultural landscapes within traditional villages, ensuring they can continue contributing to local economic growth within the framework of sustainable development. This pursuit has emerged as a central theme in recent years within cultural tourism research on traditional villages.

1.3 Research Area

1.3.1 Overview of Shaxi Town

1.3.1.1 Formation and Development of Shaxi Town Culture

Situated in the southwestern region of Jianchuan County, Yunnan Province, China, Shaxi Town stands as one of the principal tourist destinations within the region. This picturesque locale finds its place within the natural reserve encompassing the Jinsha, Lancang, and Nujiang rivers, nestled at the southeastern extremity of the Laojun Mountain—a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. Meandering through this verdant landscape is the Heisui River, gracing the heart of this tranquil, green oasis, where charming Bai villages are strewn along both banks of the river, with wisps of smoke gently rising into the air. Characteristic of the Hengduan Mountains, Shaxi Dam extends considerably from north to south and stretches broadly from east to west. It once served as a crucial land route during ancient times (see Figure 1.1).

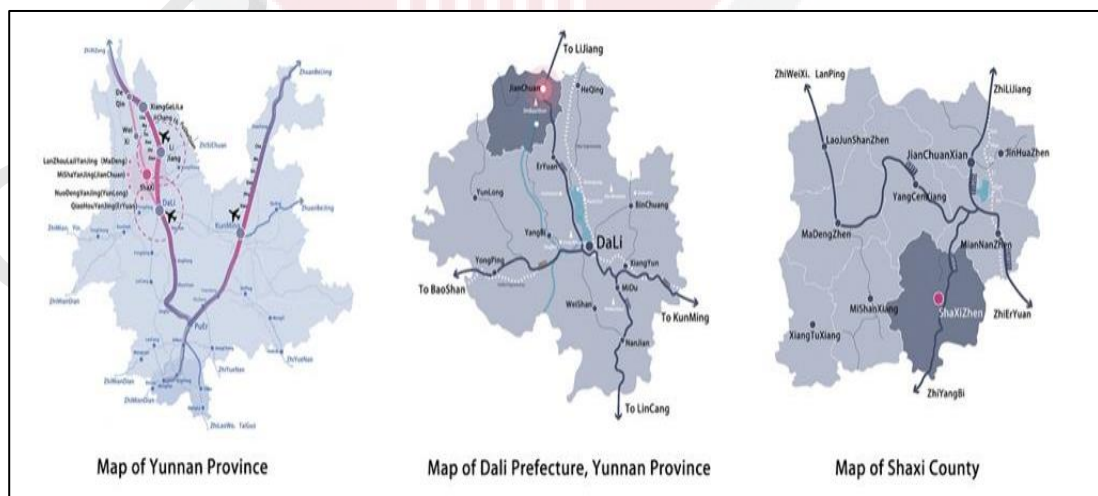


Figure 1.1 : Location map of Shaxi Town

(Source: Shaxi Township Village Plan —"Multi-Planning" Practical Village Plan Preparation, 2022)

Shaxi Town is strategically positioned between three prominent tourist hubs: Dali Prefecture, Lijiang City, and Xianggelila City. It covers an expansive area of 288 square Kilometres, encompassing 6,032 acres of arable land. The town's terrain seamlessly merges dam and mountainous regions, boasting an average elevation of 2,100 metres above sea level. With an average annual temperature of 12.3 degrees Celsius and approximately 2,400 hours of sunshine per year (September 2, 2022), Shaxi enjoys a pleasant southern temperate climate characterised by four distinct seasons and remarkable natural beauty. Nestled amidst protective mountain ranges, the region benefits from consistent temperatures throughout the year. Abundant water resources and an impressive forest coverage of 71.6% have earned Shaxi recognition as one of Northwest Yunnan's natural genetic reservoirs. Moreover, Shaxi is renowned for cultivating specialty cash crops such as ginseng and prized matsutake mushrooms. In December 2012, Shaxi earned the esteemed designation of a provincial-level eco-town, attracting tourists eager to Savour fresh matsutake mushrooms while revelling in the area's breathtaking natural landscapes.

1.3.1.2 Society and Economics

Shaxi Town, nestled along the historic Tea Horse Road, stands as one of Jianchuan County's central tourist attractions, earning the moniker of "the sole surviving ancient market" (Yang, 2003). Steeped in a rich tapestry of history, folk culture, and ecological splendour, Shaxi boasts an impressive collection of 40 villages that have garnered recognition in the esteemed "Chinese Traditional Villages" registry. These settlements collectively shape a unique

spatial configuration, characterised as a "mountain-village-field-town" blend. The tranquil Heisui River, a tributary of the Lancang River, gracefully meanders through the heart of the region, flowing from north to south, contributing to the creation of a picturesque environmental landscape. As of the close of 2021, Shaxi Town was home to a total of 7,511 households and a population of 24,229, with the Bai ethnic group forming the predominant majority, constituting 84% of the populace. Remarkably, from 2014 to 2021, the incidence of poverty plummeted from 12.44% to an impressive 0%, marking a monumental achievement in poverty alleviation (People's Government of JianChuan County, 2022).

Shaxi's economic landscape is marked by diversification, encompassing agriculture, tobacco cultivation, animal husbandry, economic forestry, fruit production, and a burgeoning tourism sector. The growth of the tourism industry has spurred urbanisation, with land area dedicated to this sector expanding from 46.35 hectares in 2001 to 72.13 hectares by 2017. Simultaneously, the number of businesses has surged from a mere one in 2002 to a thriving 162 (as per government statistics). Endowed with abundant tourism resources, a rich cultural heritage, and complemented by its unique geographic and demographic attributes, Shaxi radiates as a vibrant and promising destination for travellers.

1.3.1.3 History

Shaxi boasts a storied history that spans over 2,400 years, with roots tracing back to the Spring and Autumn, as well as the Warring States periods. During the illustrious Tang and Song dynasties, the region witnessed the rise of the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms in the southwest. Positioned as a pivotal buffer zone between the Tang Dynasty and the Tubo Kingdom at the time, Shaxi served as a crucial link and one of the primary conduits of the ancient Tea Horse Road (see Figure 1.2). This historical route played a pivotal role in facilitating economic and cultural exchanges between these influential entities (Yang,2003).

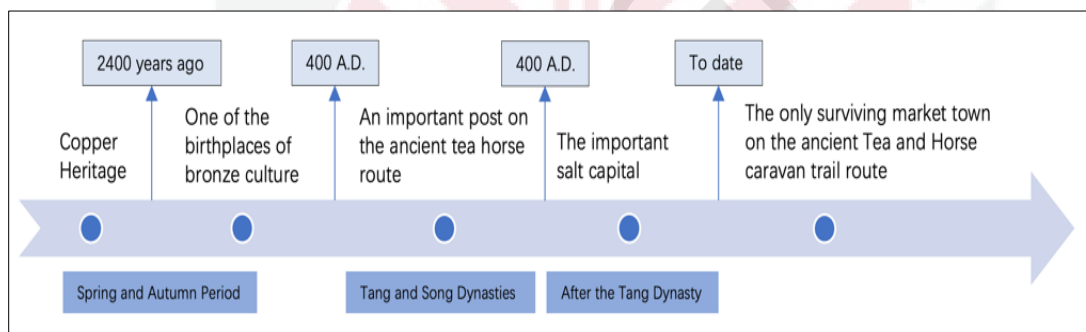


Figure 1.2 : Shaxi Town Development Process
(Source: Author, 2022)

Shaxi Ancient Town, situated along the Ancient Tea Horse Road, stands as one of the cradles of Yunnan's bronze culture. Since the days of the Tang Dynasty, Shaxi Town has played a pivotal role in the salt trade, thanks to the exploitation of its four significant salt wells. It earned the title of the Salt Capital along the Ancient Road, taking on the critical responsibility of facilitating the tea-horse trade between Tibet and the Central Plains. As a result, Shaxi

thrived as a major trading hub during this period of vibrant multicultural coexistence. The convergence of horse gang culture, ethnic traditions, and farming practices during this prosperous era helped shape the unique character of this ancient town. Unfortunately, following the decline of the horse gangs after the 1950s, Shaxi experienced a stagnation in economic development, and its cultural prosperity began to wane (Yang, 2003).

However, a turning point arrived in 2001 with the emergence of cultural tourism, breathing new life into Shaxi. This transformation attracted numerous foreign tourists, drawn by the town's rich historical heritage and its unique geographical location. Shaxi, with its compelling historical narrative encompassing the rise and fall of ancient trade culture, showcased the modern tourism potential that has made it a dynamic and promising destination (Huang, 2012).

1.3.2 Rationale for Choosing Site

There are several compelling reasons for selecting Shaxi Town as the subject of this study. First and foremost, Shaxi boasts a rich historical backdrop, offering a wealth of local characteristics and abundant landscape resources. These resources include ancient temples, historic theatres, traditional dwellings, venerable horse shops, time-worn lanes, and ancient fortress gates, among others. The intricate and diverse architectural elements found in Shaxi create a space where various cultures intersect and coexist.

Secondly, due to its exceptional cultural significance, Sideng Village within Shaxi has earned prestigious accolades, including recognition as a renowned historical and cultural town in Yunnan Province, a national historical and cultural town, and a distinguished tourist destination in Yunnan (Chen & Che, 2018).

Thirdly, Shaxi Town as a tourist destination steeped in history and culture, possesses distinctive ecological qualities, ethnic characteristics, and cultural features that make it a unique and valuable subject for study. For this research, six traditional villages oriented towards tourism within Shaxi Town have been carefully chosen as the focus. These villages include Sideng Village, Jiang Changping Village, Shilong Village, Da Changle Village, Zhongdeng Village, and Long'e Village. The subsequent sections provide detailed descriptions of each of these selected villages.

i. Sideng Village: As the administrative centre of Shaxi Town, Sideng Village holds significant influence over the political, economic, and cultural aspects of the surrounding traditional villages. Notably, in 2012, this village received recognition by being included in the initial list of traditional Chinese villages. Within its boundaries, Sideng Village encompasses a national cultural heritage protection site, Xingjiao Temple, as well as a provincial cultural heritage protection site, Ouyang Courtyard. Both Xingjiao Temple and Sideng Street have earned their place on the list of Chinese Rural Cultural Heritage Landmark Villages. Furthermore, the village's noteworthy contributions led to its designation as one of the "108 Chinese Village Business Cards" by the

China Association for the Promotion of Village and Community Development. It also holds the distinction of being named a "Yunnan Provincial Tourism Village" by the Yunnan Provincial Tourism Bureau.

ii. Jiangchangping Village: Located in the eastern part of Shaxi Town, Jiangchangping Village stands as the largest Bai ethnic village in the region. In recognition of its cultural significance, Jiangchangping Village earned inclusion in the sixth batch of traditional Chinese villages in 2022. The village boasts a rich historical heritage, preserving numerous architectural treasures such as the Wenchang Palace and KuiXing Pavilion from the Ming Dynasty, as well as the Jiabei Lane Ancient Village Gate, Benzhu Temple, and Lotus Tower from the Qing Dynasty. The introduction of the Pioneer Bookstore has drawn an influx of tourists, gradually transforming the village into a hub for rural cultural tourism, all while retaining its agricultural roots.

iii. Shilong Village: Also known as Jueshi Ping or Guazhi Ping, ShiLong Village is situated on the western side of the national scenic area, Stone Treasure Mountain. This village stands out for its picturesque high-mountain terraced pastoral countryside landscape. Positioned at the village's forefront is the Stone Dragon Reservoir, while the surrounding mountains offer abundant natural resources, including wild mushrooms. Furthermore, ShiLong Village is a custodian of a rich folk cultural heritage, exemplified by its traditional wooden houses. In 2013, ShiLong Village earned recognition as one of the second batch of traditional Chinese villages and attained the status of one of the four folk culture demonstration villages in Jianchuan County.

iv. Da Changle Village: The administrative village of Da Changle is situated in the central area of Shaxi Bazi. It shares its borders with the village of Siedeng to the east, Zhongdeng village to the south, Cuifeng Mountain to the west, and Shaping to the north. This village has a rich history dating back to the Ming Dynasty and is adorned with numerous traditional structures like Changle Kui Pavilion and Sankyo Temple. In 2014, Da Changle Village received recognition as part of the third batch of Chinese traditional villages.

v. Zhongdeng Village: This village, with a history dating back to before the Yuan Dynasty, served as an important post station along the Ancient Tea Horse Route. It is adorned with numerous ancient buildings, including the Chenghuang Temple Shining Wall and the Kui Xing Pavilion, both of which hold the designation of county-level cultural heritage units. Furthermore, the village has managed to preserve many historic Bai residential compounds. In 2014, it earned recognition as part of the third batch of Chinese traditional villages, and in 2018, it was selected as a state-level pilot village for rural revitalisation. Presently, it also houses the Museum of the Ancient Tea Horse Road History.

vi. Long'e Village: Situated on the eastern side of Shaxi Ancient Town, Long'e Village dates back to the Ming Dynasty. Nestled in the mid-mountain dam area, its highest point stands at 2019 metres above sea level, affording panoramic views of the entire dam area. This vantage point has earned Long'e Village the moniker "Shaxi Good Hope" and positions it as one of the premier viewpoints in the Shaxi dam area. Historically, Long'e Village played a pivotal

role during the Tang Dynasty and the Tubo period as a crucial hub for economic and cultural exchanges along the ancient Tea Horse Route. Owing to its wealth of historical and cultural resources, Long'e Village was recognised as part of the third batch of Chinese traditional villages in 2014.

These six villages serve as a convergence point for the diverse cultural landscape within the town of Shaxi. Furthermore, they encapsulate various dimensions of complexity encompassing the environment, culture, and socio-economics. This makes them a distinctive and significant case study, particularly in the context of managing and planning for cultural tourism and heritage preservation. Consequently, this case serves as an illustrative example for comprehending the potential revitalisation of traditional villages through rural tourism in China.

1.3.3 Analysis of Problems in each Village

This study focusses on six traditional villages in Shaxi Town. Considering the geographical and cultural diversity of Yunnan region, these villages face different challenges and opportunities in their development process. By analysing the specific problems faced by each village in detail, the aim is to delve deeper into these urgent issues that need to be addressed, in order to reveal the fundamental reasons for the unique challenges faced by each village (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 : Analysis of the Challenges of Six Traditional Villages

NO.	Village Name	Problem
1	Sideng Village	The aging population issue is becoming increasingly severe. The influx of migrants continues to grow, while the local population is notably migrating out. Intangible cultural heritage is facing difficulties in its transmission. The problem of excessive commercialisation is prominent.
2	Jiangchangping Village	Poor preservation of historical and cultural buildings. Inadequate protection of village landscapes. Severe aging population, Labour outflow, and surplus of female Labour. Insufficient cultural heritage transmission. Lack of distinctive industries. Inadequate public service facilities. Incomplete infrastructure.
3	Shilong Village	Severe alienation of traditional architecture Lack of effective protection for village landscapes. Excessive surplus of female Labour. Lack of public service facilities. Incomplete infrastructure development.
4	DaChangle Village	Poor preservation of historical and cultural buildings. Insufficient transmission of cultural heritage. Severe issues with ageing and hollowed-out villages. Inadequate public service facilities. Incomplete infrastructure development.
5	Zhongdeng Village	New constructions exhibit cultural alienation and encroach on agricultural land. Historical buildings are poorly maintained and underutilised. Inadequate protection of village landscapes. Insufficient cultural heritage transmission. Severe aging population, Labour outflow, and prominent issues with hollowed-out villages. Unstable collective income; the secondary sector is stable but low-yielding, while the tertiary sector is weak and highly seasonal. Lack of public service facilities. Incomplete infrastructure development.
6	Long'e Village	Poor preservation and underutilisation of historical and cultural buildings. Inadequate protection of village landscapes. Insufficient transmission of cultural heritage. Lack of public service facilities. Incomplete infrastructure development.

1.4 Problem Statement

In recent years, the cultural and commercial value of traditional villages has garnered widespread attention, with tourism development recognised as an effective means of promoting the economic progress of these villages. However, the reality in China demonstrates that there are relatively few instances of successful preservation and development of traditional villages (Liu & Zhang, 2002). Instead, ill-conceived planning and development activities have led to damage in numerous traditional villages. Presently, numerous Chinese traditional villages have fallen into a frustrating cycle of low-level repetitive construction and blind imitation during their development (Hu et al., 2017).

For instance, consider Shuhe Ancient Town in Lijiang City, Yunnan Province, and the Er Sea in Dali. Shuhe Ancient Town was designated as a traditional village in August 2013; however, since 2014, the town has suffered from multiple illegal forced demolitions and haphazard construction. At one point, it even resembled a chaotic 'construction site,' with extensive destruction resulting in the loss of its cultural landscape. Similarly, the Dali Er Sea has faced recurrent outbreaks of cyanobacteria crises due to years of tourism development and construction, and is still grappling with significant water pollution issues. In February 2021, a fire broke out in Wengding Village in Yunnan Province, known as 'the last primitive tribe,' reigniting a public and scholarly discourse on the preservation and development of traditional villages (Zhang, 2021).

Many industry experts have also highlighted the challenges faced in preserving and developing traditional villages (Li & Pan, 2017). In the pursuit of conservation and development, integrating the culture and tourism industries is seen as an effective approach to stimulate the local economy. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the primary objective of promoting tourism in traditional villages should be to enable tourists to experience the unique cultural charm of the locale, rather than engaging in indiscriminate commercialisation. Therefore, the focus in protecting traditional villages should underscore holistic preservation, while development should prioritize sustainability in ecology, production, and community life (Pan, 2017).

During this research work, the researcher had the privilege of leading her students on multiple field trips to traditional villages in the western Yunnan regions of Dali and Lijiang. Among these, the group particularly concentrated on Sideng Village because it had served as a model for the preservation of traditional villages in China. However, upon observing the village's current state and examining its conservation and development efforts in detail, the researcher began to deeply contemplate the complex relationship between the preservation of cultural landscapes and economic development.

Sideng Village, situated in Shaxi Town, Dali Prefecture, is a traditional village whose historic theatre, inns, temples, fortress gates, and other structures remain remarkably intact, preserving the original essence of this ancient marketplace that once linked Tibet and South Asia. In 2001, Sideng Town Village earned a spot on the World Heritage List of Endangered Architectural

Properties due to its exceptional cultural value. It was hailed by the World Memorial Architecture Foundation (WMAR) as 'the sole surviving ancient market on the Ancient Tea Horse Trail.' This recognition served as a turning point for Shaxi Town Sideng Street, marking the initiation of subsequent revitalisation initiatives (Huang, 2009).

The revitalisation project, officially known as the "Shaxi Revitalisation Plan," originated as a collaborative effort between China and Switzerland in 2002. Grounded in the guiding principle of "respecting history and emphasizing authenticity," the project led to the formulation and execution of the "Shaxi Historical and Cultural Town Protection Plan." An investment exceeding 60 million RMB was allocated to complete the restoration of Sideng Village (Huang, 2009). To demonstrate its economic viability, the local government introduced an investment management policy that attracted entrepreneurs, consequently placing Sideng Village in the spotlight for tourists and investors alike.

After the revitalisation project, the ecological environment, living conditions, social fabric, and economic prospects of Shaxi have significantly improved. Nevertheless, as the local tourism industry burgeoned, and both domestic and foreign entrepreneurs invested in the area, the indigenous residents of Sideng Village began relocating. This transformation led to shifts in the village's function, the alteration of ancient buildings and cultural landscapes, and a gradual dilution of the Tea-Horse culture and Bai culture. External factors, including power, knowledge, and commercial capital, began to disrupt the

once tranquil Shaxi Town. Problems such as distorted architectural styles, degradation of traditional buildings due to inadequate protection, and environmental pollution are beginning to surface, especially in areas outside the core protected areas.

Throughout the project, the team consistently stressed the importance of addressing the authentic needs of the local residents and ensuring their active participation (Huang, 2009). However, the challenge of striking a balance between genuine development and cultural heritage, and the quest to achieve compatibility, interaction, and symbiosis for sustainable development, have remained persistent dilemmas for the Shaxi revitalisation project (Huang & Wang, 2016).

Although China employs a dual-track system for protecting traditional villages through "Famous Historical and Cultural Villages" and the "List of Traditional Villages," the actual protection and development of cultural landscapes in traditional villages, such as Shaxi Town, continue to face significant challenges. These primary issues can be summarized in four key areas:

i. Impact of Urbanisation on Traditional Cultural Landscapes

Traditional villages in Shaxi Town have encountered significant opportunities for rapid socio-economic development. However, this development has concurrently presented a series of challenges. As the bedrock of traditional villages, the cultural landscape faces profound difficulties in the context of the eroding urban-rural divide and the continuous fusion of urban culture.

Presently, these challenges are predominantly manifested in two distinct aspects.

Firstly, the surge in tourism and ill-suited urbanisation have resulted in unbridled exploitation of historical resources by local governments and residents in pursuit of economic growth and increased incomes. Non-scientific urbanisation, the modernisation of rural areas, and profit-driven development have led to instances of 'constructive destruction' and 'developmental destruction,' encompassing the demolition of residential structures and haphazard construction (Hu et al., 2017; Sun, 2017). Excessive zeal for GDP growth has, in some cases, driven local governments to endorse tourism development initiatives that have adversely affected the architectural integrity of traditional villages and disrupted the overall harmony of the human environment.

Secondly, globalisation and urban-rural integration have contributed to the gradual fading of the distinctive cultural disparities between urban and rural regions. Villagers aspire to urban lifestyles, progressively forsaking their traditional modes of production and living in favour of an urbanised way of life. This transition not only disconnects villagers from the cultural roots of their heritage but also leads to the gradual erosion of indigenous customs and regional distinctiveness, posing a significant challenge to the future vitality of traditional villages (Feng, 2013).

ii. Destruction of Cultural Heritage due to Lagging Protection

Despite the abundance of traditional buildings in Shaxi Town, the overall state of conservation is far from promising. Currently, 10 villages have earned national-level recognition as traditional villages (see Table 1.4). However, there exists a noticeable deficiency in strategic and all-encompassing conservation planning and execution, causing a delay in conservation efforts and contributing to the decline of traditional buildings.

Table 1.4 : Shaxi Town Traditional Village Statistics

Batch	Year	Village name
1	2012	Sideng Village
2	2013	Silian Village, Shilong Village, Diantou Village
3	2014	Zhongdeng Village, Long'e Village, Dachangle Village
6	2020	Dongnan Village, Jiangchangping Village, Dengta Village

(Source: Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development of the People's Republic of China)

For instance, the historic buildings in Changle Village exhibit signs of deterioration in their original architectural style after years of use. The lack of timely and effective conservation measures has exacerbated the extent of damage to these structures, with particular concerns arising regarding their safety and structural integrity. To some extent, these issues can be attributed to the local residents' limited awareness of traditional building conservation.

Some indigenous inhabitants continue to maintain their traditional way of life, inadvertently contributing to further damage to these old buildings. For instance, they persist in using traditional wood-burning methods for cooking, often without proper chimneys in their kitchens. This results in the

accumulation of smoke during cooking, gradually causing harm to the pillars on the roofs of the kitchens and the outer gables.

Conversely, due to financial constraints faced by the indigenous population and government regulations on housing construction, some residents are compelled to inhabit existing old houses. However, due to the constraints imposed by the original building materials and craftsmanship, the internal space and functional layout of these traditional dwellings no longer meet the requirements of modern living. Consequently, villagers resort to remodelling and repairing these old houses. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness regarding cultural relics preservation and professional repair techniques during this process often leads to secondary damage to these traditional buildings. As a result, although these structures may outwardly retain their traditional appearance, they have effectively lost their original traditional characteristics.

iii. Conflicts and Challenges in the Protection and Development of Cultural Landscapes

Currently, tourism in Shaxi Town is experiencing rapid growth. However, this development has also given rise to certain pressing issues that cannot be overlooked, particularly the challenges posed by overdevelopment and cultural displacement.

A. Overdevelopment

Presently, numerous local residents opt to rent their houses to outsiders as a means to pursue economic gains. Simultaneously, they choose to reside

outside the village themselves. However, when these outsiders embark on remodelling traditional buildings, they often lack professional guidance and incorporate what they perceive as "traditional" elements into modern structures. This frequently leads to distorted architectural styles and the loss of the original cultural heritage. Furthermore, owing to the local residents' limited knowledge of traditional building construction and traditional culture, they frequently adhere to contemporary architectural styles when constructing new houses. This further erodes the overall appearance and cultural richness of traditional villages.

B. Cultural Appropriation

Reasonable tourism development can positively impact traditional villages and improve residents' lives. However, when development becomes excessively commercialized, it can erode the village's original culture. It is crucial to preserve and uphold the authenticity and integrity of the local culture. For instance, in the cases of Sideng and Jiangchangping villages, both government and commercial organisations have, in their pursuit of profit, made arbitrary changes and appropriations to traditional culture during the development process. This can lead to misleading tourists and negatively affect cultural preservation. Such practices also undermine the authenticity of local culture and disrupt the orderly transmission of traditions.

iv. Lagging Policy Guarantees and Theoretical Development of the Discipline

The traditional village cultural landscape of Shaxi Town faces the challenge of protection and development, and behind this challenge lie inadequate government policies and a lack of in-depth academic research, which are both significant factors.

Firstly, there is insufficient policy support. While the Shaxi Town government has shown some level of interest in the development and protection of cultural landscapes, there remains a lack of targeted policy support, incentives, and comprehensive legislation. This deficiency hampers progress in cultural landscape preservation (Hu et al., 2017), affecting the development and transmission of these cultural landscapes and diminishing the enthusiasm of locals for the safeguarding and development of vernacular culture.

Secondly, academic research lags behind. Theoretical research on the protection and development of cultural landscapes in traditional villages in Shaxi Town has remained underdeveloped. In planning practices, it is common to apply urban planning principles to rural cultural landscapes (Pan & Li, 2017). This approach has inadvertently exacerbated the degradation of rural cultural landscapes and hindered the effective implementation of corresponding conservation measures.

Faced with today's challenges, the traditional villages and cultural landscapes of Shaxi Town find themselves at a crossroads between preservation and development. Despite the Shaxi Town government's efforts to promote local

tourism through the creation of a tourism loop comprising six traditional villages, including Sideng Village, these villages still grapple with issues such as architectural degradation, the decline of intangible cultural heritage, and deficiencies in community governance. These internal and external conflicts are eroding the traditional villages, highlighting the pressing need for a deeper examination of theoretical frameworks and enhanced implementation of conservation efforts for the protection and development of cultural landscapes.

As irreplaceable historical and cultural treasures, traditional village cultural landscapes convey architectural styles, living traditions, and the harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural environment of a region. Nevertheless, many of these cultural landscape heritages remain at risk of destruction due to outdated conservation concepts. Hence, there is an imperative to gain a more profound understanding of these issues and to explore and enact effective conservation and development strategies.

The objective of this study is to provide a sustainable development framework for the conservation and development of traditional village cultural landscapes in Shaxi Town, offering practical reference programmes for relevant management authorities, landscape designers, and other stakeholders. In this process, finding a balance between preserving traditional culture and accommodating the evolving cultural landscape of the modern era is a pivotal task.

1.5 Research Questions

- 1) What are the challenges posed to cultural landscapes in the current conservation and development practices in traditional tourism villages in Yunnan?
- 2) What are the factors that affect the sustainable development of the cultural landscape of traditional tourism villages in Yunnan?
- 3) How can decision-makers identify effective strategies for the sustainable development of the cultural landscape of traditional tourism villages in Yunnan?

1.6 Research Objectives

To solve the research problems mentioned earlier, three objectives have been formulated:

- 1) To identify challenges in the sustainable development of the cultural landscape of traditional tourism villages in Yunnan.
- 2) To identify the factors that supports sustainable development of the cultural landscape of traditional tourism villages in Yunnan.
- 3) To formulate a framework for mitigative strategies for the sustainable development of traditional tourism villages in Yunnan.

1.7 Significance of the Study

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

For many years, scholars both domestically and internationally have delved deeply into the study of cultural heritage, ancient villages, historical cultural district tourism development, rural tourism, and folk tourism. However, the

protection and development of traditional village cultural landscapes have emerged as a relatively new topic, which has been highlighted as a focus by China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and other related departments. Even though the government places high importance on this issue, systematic research in this area is still lacking. As we strive for the long-term conservation of traditional village cultural landscapes, tourism development is considered a pivotal approach. Yet, striking a balance between its preservation and development remains a significant challenge. Hence, this field urgently requires more in-depth and comprehensive academic research to provide theoretical guidance for practice.

This study addresses this gap by constructing a theoretical framework for the integration of traditional village cultural landscape preservation and rural tourism development. It draws from prior research findings and relevant practical experiences. Through an examination of the historical context surrounding the protection and tourism development of traditional village cultural landscapes, the study seeks to identify innovative and sustainable strategies for safeguarding and developing cultural landscapes. Consequently, it offers fresh perspectives and valuable contributions to the theoretical research within on cultural landscape preservation and the development of tourism in traditional villages.

1.7.2 Practical Significance

First, this study thoroughly examines the preservation and economic development of the cultural landscapes in traditional villages within Yunnan,

with a particular focus on the practical case of Shaxi Town. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the local challenges and their underlying causes, the study formulates a set of tailored strategic recommendations. The implementation of these strategies aims to foster the sustainable development of village cultural landscapes, elevate the local tourism appeal, and offer valuable guidance and insights to other regions grappling with similar issues. Ultimately, this approach seeks to achieve a mutually beneficial scenario where cultural conservation and tourism development coexist harmoniously.

Second, this study conducts an in-depth analysis of the crucial factors influencing the sustainable development of the cultural landscape in Shaxi Town's traditional village. It then offers specific and targeted strategic recommendations to address the challenges it confronts. These insights serve as valuable resources for a wide range of stakeholders, including local government entities, residents, tourists, and landscape planners, offering potential solutions to these challenges.

Third, this study underscores the significance of sustainable development and promotes the implementation of precise strategies to attain a harmonious balance among cultural landscape preservation, economic advancement, and environmental protection. The researcher anticipates that this approach will not only facilitate sustainable development in traditional villages like Shaxi Town but will also offer practical guidance for other regions grappling with comparable challenges.

Overall, the sustainability of the protection and development of traditional village cultural landscapes ultimately contributes to preserving their integrity and continuity.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Traditional villages: Traditional villages are defined as villages that possess both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, exhibiting significant historical, cultural, scientific, artistic, social, and economic value (Hu et al.,2014).

Ancient Village: An ancient village is characterised by its rural settlement history of 500 to 600 years or more. These villages have withstood the test of time, existing in harmony with their natural environment. They feature well-preserved residential building communities and cultural traditions (Wang, 2013).

1.9 Structure of Thesis

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, consists of nine main sections: introduction, background of the study, scope of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, definitions of key terms and summary. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical concepts, core elements and research methodology used in the study. Chapter Three details the selection and description of the research site and explains the research methodology, including sample description, data collection techniques and development of the research instrument. Chapter Four presents the results of

the study. Finally, Chapter Five summarises the study, draws conclusions, summarises the findings, discusses their implications and makes recommendations for future research.



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