

Research on the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Resources in Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages of Gansu

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Abstract: Ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu are important places for inheriting traditional ethnic culture, and they are rich in ethnic memories, cultural identity and local knowledge. At present, the protection and use of their cultural resources have formed an effective system of internal and external coordination, but many problems still exist. According to the classification of the makeup of cultural resources in ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu, this paper will examine the actual situation of cultural resource protection and use, as well as the real problems they face. Therefore, the three directions for improvement mentioned above in this paper are to increase cultural confidence, build a model of shared interests and reduce the inheritance gap. The aim is to promote the integration of the living cultural inheritance of ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu with rural revitalization and provide a reference for the protection and use of cultural resources in similar ethnic cultural characteristic villages.

Keywords: Gansu, Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages, Cultural Resource Protection, Cultural Resource Utilization

1. Cultural Resource Endowment of Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages in Gansu

1.1 A Multi-Level System of Cultural Expression

The system of cultural expression in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu is a multi-level, dynamically integrated ecosystem, and the five main forms are as follows. Most local people can speak both Chinese and their own languages in daily life. For example, in the multi-ethnic village of Sunan Yugur Autonomous County, people speak Eastern Yugur, Western Yugur and Chinese together. Although the number of people and the area where the ethnic language is used are continuously decreasing due to urbanization and the spread of the common language^[1], it is still necessary for the local people to express their emotions at home, during festivals and in daily life in this language. Among the ethnic costumes listed as intangible cultural heritage in Gansu Province, there are the costumes of the Subei Mongolians, the Yugurs, the Huarui Tibetans, the Zhuoni Tibetans and the Baima people; all of them are worn in daily life, wedding customs and festival rituals by the local people^[2]. In terms of dance, the dances in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu have ethnic styles and regional characteristics. For example, both the traditional masked dance of the Baima people in Wen County and the multi-place dance of the Tibetan characteristic village in Zhouqu County are national-level intangible cultural heritage items that help to strengthen the unity of ethnic emotions and the inheritance of culture. Festivals in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu are rich in activities that show the integration of farming and nomadic cultures, exchange among various ethnic groups, and carry important connotations of ethnic culture and folk customs. In terms of rituals, the rituals in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu can be divided into three categories: life rituals (such as birth ceremonies, weddings and funerals), sacrificial and blessing rituals (such as the Tibetan "Mountain God Worship" and the Hui "Nikah Recitation"), and purification rituals (such as "smoke offering" and "mountain circumambulation"). All of the above are associated with the activities of the villagers. Fixed rules and norms are used to pass down ethnic culture and strengthen ethnic identity.

1.2 Production and Daily Life Knowledge

First, traditional handicrafts are among the main items. Traditional ethnic crafts are perceptive and experiential skills that have accumulated through a long period of production and daily life of ethnic groups. These handicrafts have elements of ethnic culture and the lives of ethnic groups, so they are regarded as important intangible cultural heritage^[3]. Traditional crafts in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu are used to promote a sense of community and pass down history and beliefs. Second, there should be an Architectural Landscape. Ethnic villages in Gansu use local materials and adapt to their environment, and in all sorts of ways incorporate ethnic culture and beliefs. For example, many villages in the Tibetan Area are built on slopes and have special stone-and-timber blockhouses. Linxia Prefecture has had residential, commercial and religious buildings for a long time. Yugur tents and uniformly constructed settlements are in the Hexi Region. The Construction Techniques, Architectural Art and Decoration of Kazakh Yurts are also worth mentioning. These architectural areas are also an important part of the ethnic architectural culture in Gansu Province, and they show how different ethnic groups live and develop their economies^[4].

2. Practices of Protecting and Using Cultural Resources in Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages of Gansu

2.1 Protection Measures

First, there is protection for the intangible cultural heritage promoted abroad. Gansu has selected a total of 285 items for the fifth batch of provincial-level representative items of intangible cultural heritage^[5], and many ethnic cultural resources in the province will be systematically surveyed, organised and recognised. Then, the resources will be added to the protection list at all levels and given official recognition and legal protection for their cultural value. By 2020, the number of state-level ethnic minority characteristic villages in the province had reached 27 in the construction of a list of such villages. The industrial structure, architectural style, settlement pattern and folk customs of these villages are all expressions of the social and cultural development characteristics of ethnic minorities^[6]. Gansu Province has set up a four-level recognition system for representative works and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage at the national, provincial, municipal and county levels to provide institutional support for the inheritance of culture. With the help of village resources, inheritors have set up intangible cultural heritage workshops for the villagers to learn traditional skills and make a living at the same time.

Second, all sorts of protection for cultural spaces are also activities. To protect the settlement pattern and architectural style of the culturally rich ethnic minority villages in Gansu Province, some special protected villages have been established. Then it will coordinate village planning with conservation planning, regulate the relationship among protection, utilisation and development, protect the overall spatial form of the village, and ensure the integrity and authenticity of the village^[7]. Continuity of life and daily life refer to the preservation of not only the visible physical architectural landscape but also the lifestyles and cultural practices of the villagers in their daily lives. Agricultural ethnic characteristic villages need to protect their local knowledge, traditional farming tools and ecological ethical concepts to ensure the economic foundation and ecological basis of their culture, which is necessary for the survival and development of this culture.

Thirdly, there has been a revival of domestic protectionism. Endogenous protection is motivated by the cultural self-awareness of the village community and the autonomous actions of the villagers, so they are able to take the initiative to protect the culture. Villagers in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu have formed their own organisations to carry out the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, cultural performances, tourism services, etc. Gradually, these organisations have begun to lead the way in collective decision-making and coordination with outside forces to give the villagers more initiative and a voice in the defence of cultural heritage. With the progress of protection publicity, regular education and external interaction, villagers are actively learning traditional languages and skills, and they are using modern media to record and spread their own ethnic culture. Thus, they have taken on the responsibility of carrying and spreading the culture.

2.2 Utilization Practices

The first is the introduction of the community-based tourism model. Systematically trained farmers

in the tourism activities of ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu have set up their homes to offer tourists accommodation, dining and cultural activities. Through eating, living and working with the farmers, tourists can experience the real rural family life and learn about the local customs, beliefs and cultural connotations. Tourism income goes to the farmers, so they are motivated to maintain the traditional residential form and hospitality culture. At the same time, the local community cooperative has also organised cultural guided tours based on natural resources and has village elders and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, as well as villagers who act as local cultural narrators. Thus, tourism has moved from one-way consumption to active participation; it is no longer just about seeing places but also about experiencing the culture deeply and feeling it.

Second, there is also the organisation of handicraft cooperatives. Organizing handicraft cooperatives will help the villages in Gansu better promote the economic development of ethnic culture through handicrafts. The company will combine traditional skills with modern design in the development of new products to create practical products that are also rich in culture. Cooperatives are working together to use all kinds of online sales platforms and tourist attractions to solve the problems of limited sales channels and weak bargaining power faced by individual cooperatives. Fair trade aims to have a group of producers negotiate prices together and protect their own interests. In 2022, the Qingyang Sachet Embroidery Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop, the Yugur Costume Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop and the Linxia Brick Carving Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop in Gansu were named "Typical Cases of Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshops". The above workshops have achieved good results in promoting village employment and income growth, cultivating civilized rural customs, revitalising rural areas, and have thus become one of the important support pillars for rural revitalization in Gansu^[8].

Third, the economy of cultural festivals has also begun to thrive. Traditional festivals in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu are rich in the history and beliefs of all ethnic groups, providing a strong cultural foundation for the development of the cultural festival economy. Among the above, the first is the foundation of the cultural festival economy. By exploring the cultural connotations of traditional festivals and integrating them with local natural scenery, the villages have created a number of cultural festival brands that are rich in regional characteristics and ethnic customs, thus increasing the visibility and influence of the villages. Minghua Township's traditional culture and art festival and the agricultural and animal husbandry sports competition in Sunan County have been combined with artistic performances, ethnic sports competitions and trade. This event has successfully established the characteristic brand of "the hometown of Yugur songs and dances" and has promoted the integrated development of traditional culture industries, tourism and sports industries effectively^[9].

3. Realistic Challenges in the Protection and Use of Cultural Resources in Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages of Gansu

3.1 The "Symbolisation" and "Stagedisation" of Culture

Symbolisation and staging of culture refer to the phenomenon in which many folk activities and festivals that originally had certain cultural connotations and functions are taken out of their original cultural environments, and their schedules and content arrangements are increasingly tailored to the peak tourism season and the viewing demands of tourists. For large-scale production and sales, the shapes, patterns and materials of handicrafts are often simplified, and they have been reduced to assembly-line tourist souvenirs. The reason for the above problems is that it has not been carried out in accordance with the "front stage, curtain and back stage" model. With the development of the tourism economy, some local governments have made local culture a "front-stage" exhibition for tourists, and as a result, traditional culture has gradually declined and disappeared^[10]. In the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu, only the daily life of the villagers is chosen to be included in the "front stage" display system and becomes paid viewing material; the real and trivial aspects of daily life are left out of sight in the "back stage". Therefore, the tourists will only be able to see the well-organised cultural performances and not experience their original nature and cultural connotations.

3.2 Disputes over Property Rights and Interests in Collective Cultural Resources

The cultural resources in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages have the attribute of collective property rights, but after being used commercially in the market economy, there have been property rights disputes and conflicts over the division of interests. The ideal state of developing rural folk

tourism is a win-win situation that benefits the public, makes the elites famous, and helps the government achieve its political goals. However, there are often disputes over the division of income in practice, and the root cause is a difference in perception between the social elite and the common villagers. The social elite believes that the success of the project is due to their own market knowledge and risk-taking, so they should be given more decision-making power and a larger share of the profits without having to guarantee equal returns for all the villagers. They believe the villagers are uncooperative out of ingratitude or envy. At the same time, the villagers believe that the main capital of folk tourism is the cultural and natural landscapes in their collective ownership, and they also contribute to the project through their own participation. They hope that the elite will lead us towards common prosperity rather than pursuing profit maximisation^[11].

3.3 The Cultural Inheritance Crisis under the Intergenerational Gap

Globalization, urbanisation and the digital age have changed the cultural identity of young people in the ethnic cultural characteristic villages of Gansu, and as a result, there is a serious intergenerational gap in the inheritance of traditional culture. Due to the influence of modern culture, young people today are beginning to question or even reject their own traditional ethnic culture. The main forms of this are as follows: On the one hand, some inheritors of ethnic minority culture have given up cultural inheritance due to the underdeveloped market for traditional skills and low economic returns; on the other hand, the new generation is aware of the economic difficulties and financial pressure faced by the previous generation of inheritors, lacks the desire to learn their own ethnic culture, and prefers industries that can yield quick profits. In addition, the direction of school education towards modernisation and urbanisation further weakens the ethnic identity of minority students with their local culture and thus indirectly affects the inheritance of the cultural genes of ethnic minorities^[12].

4. Optimization Countermeasures for the Protection and Use of Cultural Resources in Ethnic Cultural Characteristic Villages of Gansu

4.1 Preserving Cultural Authenticity

The development of the industrial sector should be in accordance with the original spirit of ethnic culture. Specifically, it should achieve the integration of the spiritual core of ethnic culture with its industrial carriers, unify the religious nature and performative characteristics of ethnic ritual activities, and coordinate the social functions and tourism functions of ethnic culture^[13]. For example, according to the "front stage, curtain and back stage" model, the function areas should be divided reasonably. Respect the original time and manner of the folk festival and preserve the culture as it has been handed down. The production norm of handicrafts should be standardised, and blind simplification of patterns, materials and techniques should be avoided. In short, the moderate innovation should be based on preserving the traditional cultural core to avoid cultural superficiality and homogenization, and it is hoped that coordinated progress will be achieved in the protection of ethnic culture and the development of tourism.

4.2 Coordinated Multilateral Interests Amidst Property Rights Conflicts

In the course of developing ethnic culture, all parties concerned should reasonably clarify the various rights and interests in cultural resources, such as ownership rights, use rights, profit rights, supervision rights and disposition rights^[14]. The development of ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu should be based on the model of government leadership, standardised enterprise operation and active resident participation. They should also encourage the local people to participate in the protection of ethnic cultural resources and the development of cultural tourism, change their former passive position, and create a development model in which the government, enterprises and residents work together to create and share benefits. At the same time, the concerned parties should build an open-and-fair benefit-sharing system. The main contents of the project income and expenditure, profit distribution, and other relevant data will be released in a timely manner. Thus, profit concentration by a few developers will be avoided, fair returns will be provided for the villagers, and the common prosperity of the community will be balanced with the development of the market economy to solve the problem of conflict of interest.

4.3 Bridging the Intergenerational Gap in Cultural Inheritance

Ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu are facing the problem of an intergenerational gap in the inheritance of traditional culture, and the three ways stakeholders can address this problem are as follows. In terms of the industry, they should use the resources of local intangible cultural heritage and folk customs to create new cultural and creative products and folk experience projects. Therefore, it will be possible to expand the industrial chain, increase the income of inheritors, and change the current situation in which inheritors have low incomes and face livelihood difficulties. Institutions should strengthen the incentive and guarantee system, introduce special subsidies for the older generation of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, and set up youth support policies. The above measures will motivate young people today to return to their hometowns for work and change their views on life and work. Traditional cultural institutions can organise regular classes and other activities based on education to boost the cultural confidence of young people and select the best and brightest to carry forward the inheritance of ethnic culture.

Conclusion

Ethnic cultural characteristic villages in Gansu are bearers of the inheritance and development of ethnic culture, and important places for the coexistence and flourishing of all ethnic groups. The special villages have built their own internal and external defence systems, but there are still some practical problems. Based on the above practice, the continuous development of ethnic culture should be based on tradition and open to the market economy. Therefore, we need to protect the authenticity of cultural development, coordinate the interests of all parties in the event of property rights conflicts, and forge a new sense of cultural identity through intergenerational inheritance in education. Only in this way can the synergy of cultural inheritance and rural revitalization be achieved, and ethnic culture characteristic villages can truly become spiritual homelands where all cultures are integrated and developed in harmony with tradition and modernity.

Fund Projects

This research was supported by the Gansu Provincial Basic Research Program - Special Project for Soft Science under Grant No. 23JRZA405.

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