

# *Research on conservation and sustainable development strategy of historical and cultural heritage*

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**Keywords:** Historical and cultural heritage protection; Sustainable development; Protection concept; Protective measures; Actual effect

**Abstract:** This study explores the integration of historical and cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategies. This paper analyzes the current situation of the protection of historical and cultural heritage at home and abroad, points out the existing problems in the protection work, and probes into the reasons behind them. This paper discusses the theoretical basis of sustainable development strategy and its application in the protection of historical and cultural heritage, and emphasizes the importance of innovation and integration of protection ideas. This paper mainly analyzes the practical effects of sustainable development strategy in the protection of historical and cultural heritage, including improving the protection level, promoting local development, and enhancing community cohesion. In order to provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for the protection of China's historical and cultural heritage, some suggestions on the innovation of protection concept and optimization of protection measures are put forward. This study is of great significance for promoting the organic combination of cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategy, and realizing the long-term and healthy development of cultural heritage protection.

## **1. Introduction**

As a witness of the development of human civilization, historical and cultural heritage carries rich historical information and cultural value. However, under the impact of modernization, the protection of historical and cultural heritage is facing severe challenges. On the one hand, the traditional protection means cannot adapt to the needs of The Times; On the other hand, the contradiction between protection and development has become increasingly prominent. In this context, to explore the integration of historical and cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategies has become an important topic in the study of historical and cultural inheritance. This study starts from the current situation and problems of historical and cultural heritage protection, analyzes the theoretical basis of sustainable development strategy, and discusses the ways and measures of the integration of the two. Through the case analysis, the experience and lessons are summarized to provide useful reference for the protection of historical and cultural heritage in China. The purpose of this study is to promote the protection of historical and cultural heritage to a scientific and sustainable development path and realize the harmonious coexistence of culture and economy.

## **2. Current situation and problems of historical and cultural heritage protection**

### **2.1. Overview of the status quo of historical and cultural heritage protection at home and abroad**

Under the tide of globalization, the protection status of historical and cultural heritage presents a complicated and diversified pattern. At the international level, UNESCO and other international institutions attach great importance to the protection of cultural heritage, and through the formulation of international laws and regulations such as the World Heritage Convention, provide legal basis and action guidelines for the protection of cultural heritage in various countries. However, although the international community has reached a consensus on the idea, in practice, the status quo of historical and cultural heritage protection in various countries is uneven, showing significant regional differences. With their strong economic strength and advanced protection technology, developed countries are often able to implement more effective protection of historical and cultural heritage<sup>[1]</sup>. For example, many countries in Europe have successfully maintained a large number of historic buildings and cultural landscapes by setting up special funds, promoting community participation, and implementing strict management systems. At the same time, these countries have found a balance between the protection of cultural heritage and the development of tourism, so that the cultural heritage can be properly protected and at the same time bring sustainable development momentum to the local economy. In stark contrast, developing countries face more severe challenges in the protection of historical and cultural heritage. The weak economic foundation, the weak protection consciousness, the lack of management system and other factors have led to the lag of cultural heritage protection in these countries. In some areas, due to war, natural disasters or overdevelopment, many precious historical sites are facing the danger of extinction. Even in peacetime, rapid urbanization and industrialization have often caused irreversible damage to cultural heritage. In China, although the protection of historical and cultural heritage has achieved certain results, the problem still cannot be ignored. On the one hand, the government has gradually increased its input in the protection of cultural heritage, and promulgated a series of laws and regulations, such as the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which provides legal guarantee for the protection of cultural heritage. On the other hand, with the development of social economy and the improvement of people's living standards, the public's awareness and participation in the protection of cultural heritage are also constantly improving. However, problems such as the contradiction between protection and development, lack of protection funds, lack of professionals, and backward protection technology are still prominent, especially in some economically underdeveloped areas, and there is still a long way to go in the protection of cultural heritage.

### **2.2. The main problems facing the protection of historical and cultural heritage**

In the long course of history, cultural heritage as a witness of human civilization, its protection is of great importance. However, under the current social development background, the protection of historical and cultural heritage is faced with a series of complicated problems, which are like intertwined threads, testing the wisdom and patience of the protectors. It cannot be ignored that the acceleration of the modernization process has posed an unprecedented impact on cultural heritage. Urban expansion and infrastructure construction often lead to the destruction of the original environment of cultural heritage, and its historical value and cultural connotation are gradually eliminated in the flood of steel and cement<sup>[2]</sup>. Insufficient investment in the protection of cultural heritage has become a key bottleneck restricting the effective implementation of the protection work. In the allocation of financial budget, the protection of cultural heritage is often difficult to

compete with economic development projects, resulting in the comprehensive implementation of protection measures. The legal system of cultural heritage protection is still not perfect, and the connection between laws and regulations is not smooth, which makes the law enforcement efforts are insufficient, the illegal cost is too low, and it is difficult to form an effective deterrent. In addition, the shortage of professional and technical personnel is also a major problem. The lack of professionals not only affects the scientific and professional protection work, but also may lead to the implementation of protection measures greatly reduced. At the same time, the lack of public participation is also a prominent problem. Due to the lack of adequate publicity and education, the public's understanding of cultural heritage protection is insufficient, and the enthusiasm to participate in the protection is not high, which makes the social foundation of cultural heritage protection is not strong enough. What is more complicated is that the protection of cultural heritage is also facing the challenge of regional differences. The historical and cultural background, economic development level, social customs and other factors in different regions have put forward different requirements for cultural heritage protection. How to develop a universal protection strategy while respecting local characteristics has become an urgent problem to be solved. At the same time, the contradiction between dynamic nature and static nature of cultural heritage protection has become increasingly prominent. On the one hand, cultural heritage needs static protection to maintain its original historical appearance. On the other hand, cultural heritage needs dynamic inheritance to maintain its vitality. How to find a balance between the two is a difficult problem in conservation work.

### **2.3. Analysis of factors affecting the protection of historical and cultural heritage**

The complexity of historical and cultural heritage protection lies in the fact that it is affected by many factors, which either explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, jointly shape the diversified situation of current cultural heritage protection. Policy orientation is the primary factor affecting the protection of cultural heritage. The government's cultural heritage protection policies, the degree of perfection of laws and regulations and the intensity of implementation directly determine the overall pattern of cultural heritage protection<sup>[3]</sup>. The deviation or insufficiency of policy orientation may lead to the shift of the center of gravity of protection work, and even cause irreversible cultural losses. Economic factors also play a key role. The level of economic development directly affects the capital investment, technical support and human resource allocation of cultural heritage protection. In the context of rapid economic development, cultural heritage protection often conflicts with commercial development, and how to find a balance between economic benefits and cultural values has become a major problem. In addition, the changes in values brought about by social changes cannot be ignored. Modern society's cognition and attitude towards traditional culture affect the public's support for cultural heritage protection. The diversity of social values, on the one hand, promotes the renewal of the concept of cultural heritage protection, on the other hand, it also brings the uncertainty of protection standards. The impact of technological progress on the preservation of cultural heritage is equally profound. Modern science and technology provide new means and methods for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage, but the improper use of technology may also cause damage to the authenticity of cultural heritage. At the same time, the speed of technological upgrading requires protection workers to continue to learn and adapt, which puts higher requirements on the construction of professional teams. Environmental factors can not be ignored. Climate change, natural disasters and other environmental factors pose a threat to the survival of cultural heritage, and how to protect these vulnerable cultural assets in the context of environmental change is a major challenge for conservation work.

The popularization of education and the awareness of cultural inheritance are the internal factors affecting the protection of cultural heritage. The degree of emphasis on the protection of cultural heritage in the education system determines the cognition level and protection consciousness of the members of the society. The lack of effective educational transmission may lead to the breakdown of cultural heritage protection. The impact of international exchanges and cooperation cannot be underestimated. In the context of globalization, the international community's exchange of ideas, experience and technology on the protection of cultural heritage has played a role in demonstrating and promoting the domestic protection work. However, the introduction of international standards also needs to consider the adaptability and particularity of local culture.

### **3. Theoretical basis of sustainable development strategy**

#### **3.1. The origin and development of sustainable development theory**

The origin of sustainable development theory can be traced back to the middle of the 20th century, when the rapid advancement of industrialization and modernization of human society brought unprecedented economic growth, but also exposed a series of serious problems such as resource depletion, environmental pollution and ecological damage. In the face of these challenges, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 put forward the concept of "sustainable development" for the first time, marking the birth of sustainable development theory. Since then, this theory has experienced the evolution process from concept advocacy to practice exploration, and then to the construction of theoretical system. In the early stage of theoretical development, the World Commission on Environment and Development, led by Norwegian Prime Minister Madame Brundtland, made a classic definition of sustainable development in the report "Our Common Future" released in 1987, which was defined as "development that can meet the needs of the present generation without harming the ability of future generations to meet their needs"<sup>[4]</sup>. This definition laid the foundation for sustainable development theory and triggered a wide discussion of sustainable development models around the world. With the passage of time, the theory of sustainable development continues to deepen and expand. Agenda 21, adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, moved sustainable development from a theoretical level to practical action, and governments began to integrate it into national development strategies. In this process, the connotation of sustainable development is gradually enriched, which not only includes the balance of the three dimensions of economy, environment and society, but also emphasizes intergenerational equity, intra-generational equity and harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In the 21st century, the theory of sustainable development has been further integrated under the new background of globalization, climate change and scientific and technological progress. In 2002, the World Sustainable Development Summit put forward the "Johannesburg Plan of Implementation", which concretized the goals of sustainable development and promoted the practice of sustainable development on a global scale. At the same time, the academic circle has increasingly diversified the research on sustainable development theory. From ecological economics, environmental ethics to development strategy and other disciplines, the theoretical basis of sustainable development has been deeply discussed.

#### **3.2. Core principles of sustainable development strategy**

The core principles of the sustainable development strategy are like the compass that guides a ship through rough seas, providing a clear direction for the long-term development of human society. The principle of equity is the cornerstone of sustainable development strategy. It emphasizes intergenerational equity and intra-generational equity, that is, while meeting the needs

of the present generation, the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is not damaged, and justice among different groups is achieved in resource allocation. This principle requires that the rights and interests of different stakeholders, especially the basic survival and development needs of vulnerable groups, must be taken into account in the formulation of rules and the utilization of resources. The principle of sustainability is the lifeline of sustainable development strategy, which requires that human economic activities and social development must be kept within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources and the stability of the ecosystem<sup>[5]</sup>. The principle of commonality highlights the global character of sustainable development strategies, stating that environmental issues do not respect national boundaries and that sustainable development is the common cause of all mankind. This principle requires the international community to strengthen cooperation, shoulder joint responsibilities and promote the improvement of the global environmental governance system through multilateral mechanisms and international conventions when dealing with global environmental issues. The principle of adaptability reflects the dynamic nature of sustainable development strategies. It recognizes the complexity of environmental and socio-economic systems and emphasizes that development strategies should have flexibility and adaptability to cope with changing external conditions. The principle of comprehensiveness is the essence of sustainable development strategy, which emphasizes integrity and systematism and holds that sustainable development should cover multiple aspects such as economy, society and environment, and achieve multi-goal coordination through cross-sectoral and cross-field comprehensive decision-making. This principle advocates the adoption of systems thinking and methods to comprehensively consider the interaction between various factors in order to achieve comprehensive social and economic development.

### **3.3. The application of sustainable development strategies in the protection of historical and cultural heritage**

The application of sustainable development strategy in the field of historical and cultural heritage protection is not only a rich extension of the theoretical connotation of the strategy, but also an innovative exploration of the practical path of cultural heritage protection. In this process, the core principles of sustainable development strategy are cleverly integrated into all aspects of historical and cultural heritage protection, thus providing a solid theoretical support for the long-term survival of cultural heritage. First of all, the application of the principle of fairness in the protection of historical and cultural heritage is reflected in the balance of understanding the value of cultural heritage. This means that in the protection practice, we should not only pay attention to the restoration and maintenance of the material cultural heritage, but also pay attention to the inheritance and development of the intangible cultural heritage, and ensure that different types of cultural heritage and different regions are equally respected and protected. The application of the principle of continuity in the protection of historical and cultural heritage is manifested in the long-term planning of the protection mode of cultural heritage. This requires that in the protection work, we should not only pay attention to the short-term protection effect, but also focus on the long-term, through scientific protection means and technology, to ensure the physical integrity and historical continuity of cultural heritage, so that it can be sustainable in the long river of time. The application of the principle of commonality in the protection of historical and cultural heritage emphasizes the importance of community participation and international cooperation. Protecting cultural heritage is not only the responsibility of the government and experts, but also the common mission of the public. Through community participation, the public's sense of identity and responsibility for the protection of cultural heritage can be enhanced; Through international cooperation, the exchange and sharing of protection experience can be promoted and the overall



level of protection work can be improved. The application of adaptability principle in the protection of historical and cultural heritage is reflected in the flexible adjustment of protection strategies. In the face of changing social and natural environments, conservation strategies need to be resilient enough to adapt to new challenges. For example, for cultural heritage threatened by natural disasters, protection measures should be adjusted in a timely manner and more advanced disaster prevention and reduction technologies should be adopted.

## **4. Integration of historical and cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategies**

### **4.1. Innovation and integration of protection concepts**

In the integration of historical and cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategies, the innovation and integration of conservation concepts plays a pivotal role. This process involves not only a profound rethinking of traditional conservation concepts, but also a forward-looking acceptance of sustainable development concepts, which are intertwined to give rise to a new perspective on conservation. The traditional conservation concept emphasizes the static maintenance of the cultural heritage itself, while the new concept, which integrates the sustainable development strategy, pays more attention to the dynamic protection and living inheritance of cultural heritage. The innovation of this concept is reflected in the understanding and respect of the vitality of cultural heritage, advocating the integration of utilization in protection, and promoting the sustainability of protection through rational utilization. The integration of sustainable development strategy has promoted the transformation of conservation concept from single dimension to multiple dimension. Traditional conservation work often focuses on the restoration and preservation of the material level, while the new conservation concept emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of the material and the immaterial, the noumenon and the environment, the history and the modern. This concept of integration requires that in the protection practice, we should not only pay attention to the material form of cultural heritage, but also dig deeply into its cultural connotation and social value, so as to realize the organic unity of cultural heritage protection and social development. The innovation and integration of conservation concepts are also reflected in the emphasis on community participation and public awareness. Under the guidance of the Sustainable Development Strategy, conservation work is no longer a one-man show for experts and governments, but a process that encourages and mobilizes the active participation of the community. This bottom-up participation mode helps to enhance the public's awareness of cultural heritage protection and form a protection pattern with the participation of the whole society. Furthermore, the conservation philosophy of innovation and integration emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation. The protection of historical and cultural heritage is no longer the domain of a single discipline, but requires the comprehensive application of multidisciplinary knowledge and technical means such as archaeology, architecture, anthropology and environmental science. This interdisciplinary cooperation provides strong support for the deepening of conservation concepts and the innovation of practice.

### **4.2. Optimization and implementation of protection measures**

In the integration process of historical and cultural heritage protection and sustainable development strategy, the optimization and implementation of protection measures have become the key link to promote this process. This process involves a profound review and systematic reconstruction of traditional conservation measures, aiming to achieve long-term and sustainable protection of cultural heritage through a series of innovative implementation strategies. The

optimization of protection measures is reflected in the improvement and innovation of protection technology. Traditional conservation technologies tend to focus on salvage restoration, while optimized measures pay more attention to preventive protection and scientific management, using advanced monitoring technology, material science and digital means to carry out comprehensive and multi-level protection of cultural heritage. The implementation of conservation measures emphasizes coordination with local socio-economic development plans. In this process, protection measures are no longer isolated actions, but closely integrated with urban planning, tourism development, community construction, etc., forming a virtuous circle of mutual promotion and common progress. For example, the integration of cultural and creative industries not only protects the authenticity of cultural heritage, but also stimulates its economic value, achieving a win-win situation between cultural heritage protection and local economic development. The optimization of protection measures is also reflected in the improvement of the legal and regulatory system. Under the guidance of the sustainable development strategy, the formulation and implementation of relevant laws and regulations pay more attention to the protection of the overall environment of cultural heritage and the effective containment of acts of destruction. The implementation of these measures has provided a strong legal guarantee for the protection of cultural heritage. Improved conservation measures focus more on community participation and public education. By carrying out diversified cultural heritage education activities, the public's awareness of cultural heritage and protection awareness are raised, and the protection work is transformed from passive acceptance to active participation, thus building a broad mass base.

#### **4.3. The practical effects of sustainable development strategies in the protection of historical and cultural heritage**

The actual effect of sustainable development strategy in the protection of historical and cultural heritage is not only an important indicator to measure the effectiveness of integration, but also an important driving force to promote the deepening of protection work. It can be seen from practical cases that the application of sustainable development strategies has not only effectively improved the protection level of cultural heritage, but also achieved remarkable results in promoting local economic and social development, enhancing community cohesion and enhancing public cultural consciousness. To be specific, the practical effect of sustainable development strategy in conservation practice is first reflected in the maintenance of the authenticity of cultural heritage. By adopting scientific protection methods and dynamic management means, the historical information and cultural value of cultural heritage have been effectively preserved, so that cultural heritage can still maintain its unique charm and vitality in the contemporary society. The practical effect of the sustainable development strategy is also reflected in the overall improvement of the cultural heritage environment. Under the guidance of this strategy, conservation is no longer limited to the cultural heritage itself, but extends to the comprehensive management of its surrounding environment, such as ecological conservation, landscape restoration and infrastructure construction, thereby creating a harmonious external environment for cultural heritage. The practical effect of the sustainable development strategy in promoting local economic and social development should not be underestimated. Through the active utilization of cultural heritage, such as cultural tourism and the development of cultural and creative industries, it not only injects new vitality into local economic growth, but also provides employment opportunities for local residents and promotes sustainable social and economic development. The role of sustainable development strategies in enhancing community participation and public cultural awareness should not be ignored. Through activities such as cultural heritage education and community participation in conservation projects, residents' awareness and pride in cultural heritage have been significantly enhanced, and the

community's cultural cohesion and sense of identity have also been enhanced.

## 5. Conclusions

Through in-depth analysis of the current situation and problems of historical and cultural heritage protection and the theoretical basis of sustainable development strategy, this study discusses the necessity and feasibility of the integration of the two. It is found that integrating the concept of sustainable development into the protection of historical and cultural heritage can help solve the contradiction between protection and development and maximize the value of cultural heritage. In the concrete practice, we should innovate the protection concept, optimize the protection measures, strengthen the policy support and public participation, so as to form a good pattern of the whole society participating in the protection of cultural heritage. Although there are still many challenges in the process of integrating historical and cultural heritage protection with sustainable development strategies, as long as we adhere to scientific development and actively explore, we will certainly find a protection path suitable for China's national conditions, leave precious cultural heritage for future generations, and realize the sustainable development of Chinese culture.

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