

## THE ISSUE ON EVALUATION OF VALUE SYSTEM AND PROTECTION TO THE FEATURES OF EXTANT NON-TOP FAMOUS CITIES AND TOWNS IN CHINA

*Li Hongguang, / China*

Vice professor of NCWU, The member of the architectural society of China

*Liu Yuqing / China*

Lecturer of NCWU

In China with a long history and vast area of land, there have been great numbers of villages and towns. In the past, their primary state were well kept because of the slow development of economy and society, besides, they were hidden in the remote mountain areas and plains, and they were far away from people's attention. In the recent decade, deep and dramatic changes have taken place in China, people's needs have been going fashionable. The construction of cities and towns have also been involved in the mutual competition and commercial operation. This situation has caused a thorough damage of some cities, towns and villages to be discovered, in which, as we know, their features, architecture, customs and habits, culture have existed for decades, even hundreds of years. In China, some well-known cities and towns have been under good protection such as Pingyao, Lijiang, Zhouzhuang etc, they all carry their different characteristics, and they are undoubtedly excellent. But, can they represent the traditional features of all the other cities and towns? Are there any other cities and towns which have their own features but are not very famous and on which we haven't got to know and focused? How about their current fate? This paper means to arouse the researchers and administrators' focus on the latter types of cities and towns --- which are called Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns, besides, the paper illustrate how to definite, evaluate and protect these cities and towns. Comparatively speaking, top famous cities and towns mean which are in the list protected by national laws.

### **Firstly: The Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns carry the special, potential, region-linked value of preservation and research**

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Although the features of Non-Top Cities and Towns are not prominent and representative, they can be clearly perceived. Picture 1 shows that the building and street have two different style of both opening and enclosing, or grave and lively. So, we can judge that the building and the street are likely to be in the transmission zone of south and north climate. Indeed, this picture was taken in a small town in

Henan—a province in central China. But we don't know more about it, and the custom and habits, the relationship between people, commercial activities hidden behind the building are even unknown to us.

Cities and towns are not only the samples of the regional architecture and social features, but the media of local culture and living state. The traditional cities and towns in China are of diversity. Non-Top Cities and Towns means the sub-type samples of society and architecture, they are the important part of the composition of the culture. They can provide varieties of cases and samples which are close to practical life and bear the micro-different characteristic. Protecting Top Cities and Towns and neglecting Non-Top ones will affect the scope and dynamics of the protection and loss the integrity of the completed system, value and influence for the sake of the insufficient samples. Picture 2-9 were all taken in Henan Province. These towns are only several hundreds km away apart, their transportation is convenient to some extent from ancient time to the present. But, the difference between them is doubtless. The difference from the buildings in other regions can be much easier to be distinguished. Value of the architecture of this micro-difference and gradual development is worth of being practiced and analyzed.

Non-Top Cities and Towns might be the treasure unknown to us. Don't you think Pingyao, Zhouzhuang were selected and discovered from a pile of anonymous cities and towns? Non-Top Cities and Towns may develop into representative, famous and of new type, or they may keep on maintaining their regional and sub-type position. But, no matter whatever they will be, their value is oblivious, despite of their difference in the value and importance.

Seen from above, we have talked more about the material substance of the features of the cities and towns. In fact, among these substances, many other forms, sphere and contents are still easy to be observed. For example, there are

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non-material heritage such as folk talking and singing, dialect, regional symbol, wedding and funeral custom and communicative appointment etc. In some regions, Chinese couplets can be written in Islam characters; but, in other regions, the couplets of the Spring Festival can only be written with blue paper and white characters instead of red paper and black characters if there is a family member passing away in the same year. In Henan Province, there is custom that family members can be exempt from the formal memorial ceremony three years after the passing away of their seniors. It deserves to be studied whether there is some relationship between the custom and the structure of population, distribution of family members, and interior family relationship. The World Heritage Association has extended the protection from nature, cultural heritage to non-material heritage. We think that the protection to Non-Top Cities and Towns not only bears the significance in terms of culture of the architecture, but also provides a large field for the protection to non-cultural heritage.

The features and implications of cities and towns can be regarded as Local-Languages (mother tongue of the city), while Non-Top Cities and Towns can be regarded as a dialect which may not be elegant, sweet, classical but is truly a primary language with special charm. We will never give them up.

## **Secondly, the features of Non-Top Cities and Towns are in dangerous conditions**

### **1 Not being investigated and recorded generally**

The researchers and the local Government is not aware of the features of the local cities and towns and the present situation of the preservation as well. They are unable to evaluate, classify and protect them. There have been only few personal investigation and attention.

### **2 Numerous and scattered**

These cities and towns lie in faraway districts with lower development of economy and transportation. Many financial and administrative difficulties exist.

### **3 Look ordinary**

There seem to be too many of these cities and towns. So, people don't cherish them. It is hard to definite and evaluate them,. It also takes time, money, man- power to make investigation. The standard of evaluation is not easy to master.

### **4 Not being famous, hard to be noticed by social groups**

People are very cautious to the towns like Zhouzhuang, Xidi because of their fames. Would Zhouzhuang maintain its current features if it had not been discovered and become a representative of water towns of southern China from a neglected small village? Perhaps, there are many beautiful "small Zhouzhuang" waiting to be perceived and selected! And there are much more cities and towns all over the country carrying the regional architecture, culture, custom, life modes, primary and non-regional characteristics. They have originally been feeble and declined and are likely to be damaged and removed. Picture 10,11 could tell us.

### **5 Tending to be damaged and removed**

With the rapid development of Chinese economy, from the key cities and towns to the ordinary ones, from the developing regions to remote areas, the reform of cities and towns and the development of commodities have shifted their centers. All these reform and development are thorough and complete, the fragile tradition isn't able to compete with them. Picture 12, 13 are examples.

Non-Top Cities and Towns tend to be regarded as the places with low value and non-significance to be preserved. But, they usually cover the key regions and so-called golden blocks. They are the appearance of the regions. They not only affect the views of the cities and towns but also contain rich economic interests. So, in order to realize the ambitious interests and the decorating honor, the greedy development businessmen and ignorant governments always aimed at them, which become the prey easily to be hunted. We don't deny the awareness of cherishing tradition of these development businessmen and the governments. But they are not able to preserve and continue the true value of the cities and towns due to the ineffective evaluation systems, principles and procedures. Motivated by the urgent plans and instant attempts, the best result they can don is confusing one feature with another, displaying a low forms of mixture.

Can you see that the "horse-head wall" with southern Anhui features appears in the building of so-called residence with folk style at other places? What the development businessmen and the officials with cherishing traditional awareness could do is getting rid of the worthwhile real things and creating an inappropriate sham. To be more ordinary, people remove all the traditional things and replace them with a fashionable substance. Picture 14 is an example of this kind.

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To be more fearful, the inhabitants of Non-Top Cities and Towns have changed their attitude owing to the influence of the current fashion. They hold a common sight and turn a blind eye to the transforming features. They are eager for the life style and architecture modes in large cities. Of course, Non-Top Cities and Towns usually belong to the previous times, many aspects can not adapt to the present condition. People here don't feel they live a good life, they are anxious to transform the towns. Maybe they are unwilling to leave the peaceful, harmonious, friendly, kind life and surroundings. But what they want to get much more is to thoroughly remold themselves, realize the modernization in both economy life standard and architecture environment. They expect high buildings, wide streets, busy transportation and colorful life. The prosperous city scenery might be the examples that many municipal officials and inhabitants are eager for. We visited some villages and towns, in our opinions, their features and art value are doubtless. Look at Picture 15–30.

But most dwellers had a surprising look at us, they seemed to ask us: Why do you take the picture of these old houses? What is the use of them? Some people were more direct and frank; they said that these old houses were worthless stuff which should be removed at once.

There is some deviation between the needs of the dwellers in the cities, towns and the unconventional protection and cherishment of the sphere of learning. We have no rights to ask the inhabitants to keep on residing and earning their living in the dangerous buildings without any modern facilities. We must find a good way for them to live in a better condition and surroundings, rather than let them to be separated from realistic society. Here are two good examples for reference.

Picture 31—34 were taken in a well-known street in a famous city, which turns out that the facilities in the traditional city can still be effective and meet the people's basic needs of modern life with the special charm through a certain kind of promotion and transformation. The second group of pictures 35---38 shows us a underground-courtyard buildings in western Henan Province. In recent years, it has served as an appropriate site for reception, conference, tourism after maintenance. On one hand, the life period of the building gets lasted, on the other hand, the characteristic of the regional architecture gets protected.

Of course, we must adapt various methods and strategies to different types of architecture and block environment. Because of the limited time and rough survey, the pictures

above were only taken in Henan Province. But we can predict that such kinks of samples exist in different places in China.

The foundation of the existence of a city or town lies in its own characteristic that is not easy to form. The experiences through the past decades and hundreds of years may have brought the city or town much accumulation. Although it is out of date, it is still helpful to make the town distinguish from others. Picture 39—42 show us a example. So, it is the "mother tongue of city" which will become valuable treasure for the sustainable development of the city. It is a short sighted and violent behavior to force a town or a city to give up the local native language and speak other languages without rhyme and reason. Let us look picture 43—46. Researchers, designers, government administrators should avoid their carelessness and subjective interference.

There is one aspect to stress: Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns haven't been in the list of the working programs and procedures of researchers and government departments concerned.

In China, the preservation of historical relics and cultural cities of different levels has experienced a long history and it has got the completed systems, methods and sufficient financial support. But Non-Top Cities and Towns are different from these cities, they haven't got the support in terms of law and policy and they can't be protected by means of enclosing and static measures. They cover a large area with many contents; they are used by inhabitants and can't be separated from the uses of life. Even great efforts of finance and man-power are workable; the vitality of these cities and towns will still disappear.

Although some experts with super vision have worked on some places in Zhejiang, Fujian, Shanxi province for quite a long time, in general speaking, investigating and researching on wider area have not been started get.

Merely observed from the value of architecture and historical relics, Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns are difficult to be classified into a certain type or level of preservation. They are the seeming, flat groups and implied contents rather than an outstanding individual. But it is just because the complex implication and background contained and the difficulties of evaluation behind them that Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns deserve the careful preservation and research.

Thus, as to the law and system, a lawful status should be

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offered to Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns. Besides, new technology and methods should also be surveyed and discussed.

**Finally, as for the protection issue of the extant Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns, we put forward the following suggestion**

1 Holding research activities of the sphere of learning, cooperating with the Government and media, arousing various and regional public awareness, attention, and discovery to the features of cities and towns, regional culture, living environment and other substance and phenomena.

2 Conducting investigation, arranging and setting up the necessary data and files (wording, picture, video). The investigation can be conducted either from upward to downward, or from downward to upward to arrange, report, reinvestigate, check in order to get the correct and detailed information with the local characteristics through the repeated surveys.

3 Exploring and working out the “evaluation system and protective mechanism about Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns”, evaluating and classifying the valuable cities and towns, providing instruction and strategies to them.

Evaluation can be carried out by researchers according to architecture, economy, industries, social structure, ecological environment, history, culture, geography, transportation elements, and folk customs to affirm the relevant types, composition of the characteristics and the degree of the value.

Taking architecture and existing activities as examples: They can be divided into city structure, scope, boundary, mark, topography, size of place, type of architecture, streets, block, public buildings, municipal facilities, protective facilities, scenic spots, historical and cultural relics, public space, architecture features, building materials, building colors, construction methods, architecture structure, botany, environment and artistic piece, customs and religions, life modes, the activities of the stream of people, employment situation, industrial characteristics and types, distribution and influence of economic activities, special buildings and particular type of activity etc. All these elements can be evaluated through the classified target of grade two and grade three.

After the discussion, adjustment and completion, a perfect,

systematic, scientific and open evaluation system is worked out. Then, we can carry out the evaluation to the surveyed and selected cities and towns.

4 Displaying the result of the evaluation to public in the cities and towns in proper way and wider areas by means of the suitable patterns; soliciting opinions and information from different aspects, making a proper adjustment according to the feedback and comments to make sure that the result of evaluation is correct, scientific and without any missing.

After the legal procedure, the government distributes the evaluation result according to the value and protecting grade. (city, town, country)

5 Arranging the protection of the city features in the government working programs, cooperating it with the plans of economic development and city development.

Working with the local government and planning administrative departments to work out the concrete protective and developing methods and measures to manage and guide the practical construction activities. Trying to work with the reliable law, workable methods and simple procedures, making the work known to public.

6 Organizing sphere of architecture learning, designers, real estate businessmen, economists, administrators to discuss how to stimulate the traditional cities and towns to adapt to various modes, policies, measures and schemes that the development of modern life and needs requires, putting forward concrete, workable, effective methods to protect and extend the traditional value, create and stimulate the new value, promote what is beneficial and abolish what is harmful.

Investigating and Researching on Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns in China would provide protecting historical remains and relics wider setting, live setting and social setting.

To be summarized, we hope that our paper can arouse the public attention to the evaluation system and protective mechanism on Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns in China, from which we will study the relevant theories, systems and strategies and make a great effort to the protection and extension of traditional heritages and values in China and make sure of the abundance, integrity and diversity of them.

Scenes from picture 47—50 present expectation of

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children in some Non-Top Famous Cities and Towns. We hope inhabitant there could enjoy convenient life and arrogant characteristics in the future.

### **Abstract**

The Venice Charter 1964 (and subsequent ICOMOS charters and declarations) recognize the cultural significance of settings and surroundings of monuments and of monuments and sites. However, this recognition is mostly in general terms, without enunciating the wide range of values, associations and meanings that might be present at a specific monument or site.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

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Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

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Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



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Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24

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Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

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Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36

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Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43

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Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49



Fig. 50