

Development and Prospect of Cultural Landscape Heritage Preservation in China

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ABSTRACT

Cultural landscape heritage has garnered increasing global attention since being recognised on the World Heritage List 32 years ago. With its 5,000-year cultural history, China has cultivated a multitude of cultural and natural heritage, yet only seven Chinese cultural landscape sites are listed as World Heritage. Without comprehensive study and protection measures, the value of these landscapes might not be fully realised. This paper aims to enhance the understanding and protection of China's cultural landscapes. The study employs summary, textual, and comparative analysis methods. It begins by reviewing the concepts and characteristics of cultural landscapes and cultural heritage. It then categorises global research on cultural landscape protection, with a focus on World Heritage applications. The legal protection status of China's cultural landscapes is examined, followed by a comparative analysis of protection measures in selected Asian and European countries, identifying effective practices and areas for improvement. The research highlights significant gaps in the protection of China's cultural landscapes. The findings underscore the importance of valuing cultural landscapes as vital components of natural heritage. The paper concludes by proposing four basic principles for the protection and development of China's cultural landscapes, aiming to enhance legislative measures, promote societal awareness, and provide a framework for future legal developments, ensuring the preservation of these landscapes for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural landscape heritage preservation in China has gained significant attention in recent years, reflecting the growing recognition of its importance across relevant departments of the Chinese government. Inscription of cultural landscapes to the World Heritage List has spurred investment and interest in these sites' research, protection, and management throughout the country. However, despite this increased focus, the study and protection of China's cultural landscapes remain in their infancy, falling short of the international community's expectations (Han, 2021). As a nation with a rich and ancient cultural history, China boasts Fifty-nine UNESCO cultural and natural World Heritage Sites, the second largest in the world. Nevertheless, this impressive legacy is not adequately represented in cultural landscapes. According to UNESCO's 2024 statistics, China has only six (6) out of 189 cultural landscapes worldwide (Fig. 1 and 2) raising important questions about the current state of China's cultural landscape heritage.

To fully understand the situation, it is essential to examine both the protection of cultural landscapes within China and the international context. Preserving these landscapes is vital for maintaining historical and cultural continuity and safeguarding the natural environments intertwined with them. This paper aims to enhance the understanding and protection of China's cultural landscapes by addressing three (3) key objectives: exploring the concepts and characteristics of cultural landscapes and cultural heritage, analysing the legal protection status of China's cultural landscapes while comparing typical protection measures in Asian and European countries, and identifying shortcomings in China's current protection efforts to propose actionable principles for future development. Through this comprehensive study, the research is expected to fill gaps in existing preservation strategies and provide a robust framework for ensuring that China's invaluable cultural landscapes are protected and appreciated for future generations.



Fig. 1. World Heritage Map-cultural landscape

Source: Web of World Heritage Convention, 2024

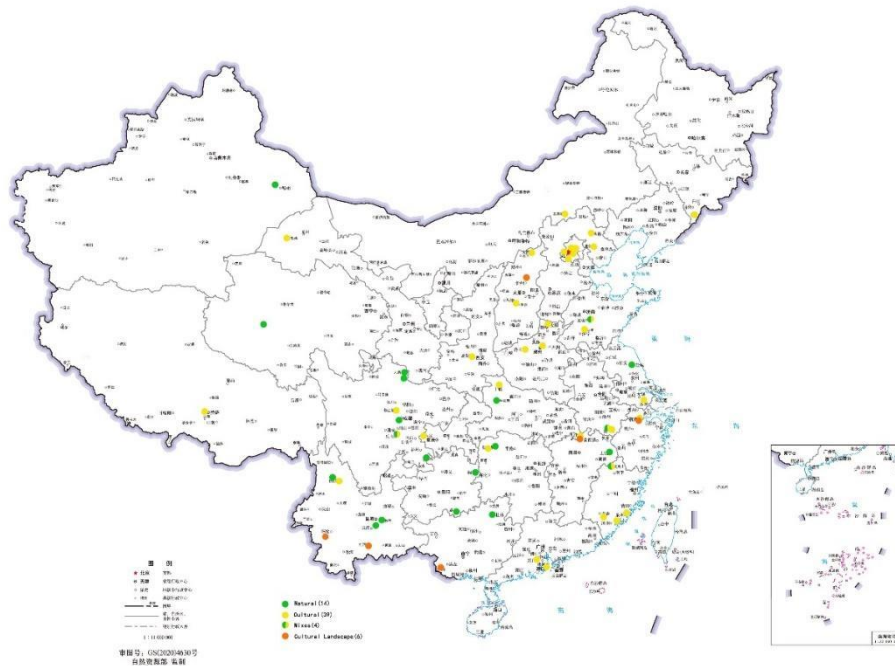


Fig. 2. Distribution of World Heritage sites in China

Source: Author, 2024

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Cultural Landscape Heritage

In 1992, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre revised the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972 to provide a clear definition of cultural landscape; cultural landscape heritage is "the common masterpiece of nature and mankind". Since then, the world cultural landscape heritage has been included in world heritage research. Therefore, this section will summarise and evaluate the achievements of cultural landscapes inscribed in the World Heritage List. For a long time, the academic community has been relatively rich in studying world cultural landscape heritage sites, forming a multi-disciplinary and multi-level situation. Among them, there are three main research themes in the field of World Heritage Management of Cultural Landscapes. Three (3) different themes reflect this by emphasising preservation, land use dynamic and heritage tourism.

Preservation Measures and Their Implications

The first theme is the study of measures taken to preserve heritage. It integrates more theoretical research, suggesting a new perspective on heritage based on cultural landscapes. It reorients the role of heritage and past-oriented disciplines away from their potential to reveal the value of traditional knowledge systems and landscapes. Conservation effort is transformed through an integrated territorial perspective (Bec et al., 2019; Reynard & Giusti, 2018). The real significance of the conservation of cultural landscape heritage lies in the balanced relationship that has been established and will continue to be established

between it and the state and citizens (Plieninger et al., 2015; Gordon, 2018). Experts recognise the dynamic and evolutionary characteristics of landscapes, which is evident in instruments such as the British Landscape Character Assessment System (LCA) and the Historic Landscape Character Assessment System (HLC). The most popular management model in the process of cultural landscape management, governance or participation is the management model based on dynamic protected area division (Cuerrier et al., 2015; Fazio & Modica, 2018). This is a more flexible model, which is most common in landscape heritage conservation in Europe, while the form of landscape classification and sub-register management is also one of the effective methods of recording and management (Aplin, 2017; Fukamachi, 2017), which is popular in Europe, Australia, and Japan in Asia.

Land Use Dynamics and Tourism Integration

The second theme focuses on cultural landscapes, historical geography, and land use. Changes in land use and land cover have the immediate impact and response of human activities on nature and are also a cultural landscape feature. Land use/land cover (LULC) research is usually based on remote sensing images, aiming at land history and geography to truly know the changes brought by human activities on land and help to understand the driving factors and dynamics of land cover transformation. Moreover, it predicts future economic and environmental impacts to provide a basis for better management and conservation (Bec et al., 2019). Among them, cultural ecosystem services (CES) have patterns of specific richness and diversity associated with specific landscape features and land cover forms (Fazio & Modica, 2018; Mitchell & Barrett, 2015). A common goal of ecosystem services research is to understand how to increase the overall delivery and diversity of ecosystem services generated by different landscapes (environmental spaces). In particular, to translate the ecosystem services framework into actual land management, decision-makers must have the tools to understand how land use affects the provision of different ecosystem services in order to decide what to prioritise or how to achieve the best compromise (Groot et al., 2010; Martinez-Harms et al., 2015; Maseyk, 2016). It is an opportunity to understand how land use affects landscape functional performance, as a monitoring system to predict future trends in landscape change, to make more informed decisions about sustainable land management, and as a tool to raise citizens' awareness of historical significance. Future research directions on this technique aim to cultivate its lateral character so that it can adopt perspectives and methods from different past-oriented disciplines, such as landscape archaeology or historical geography (Turner et al., 2020). By quantifying how people engage with and value the natural environment, we can find ways to encourage access to the natural environment and maximise positive benefits (Tew et al., 2019). By superimposing past and projected future trajectories of land change with the spatial distribution of cultural landscapes, it is found that urbanisation, agricultural expansion and contraction, and forest intensification have significantly different impacts on different types of cultural landscapes and require different policies to jointly manage cultural landscapes (Schulp et al., 2019). A reassessment of systems and lifestyles in each region can strengthen cultural identity and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

Integrating Tourism and Heritage Perspectives

The third theme involves methodological studies linking tourism studies related to cultural landscapes with landscape planning and design, focusing on methods of integrating tourism and heritage perspectives into multifunctional landscape management systems. This integration aims not only at conservation but also at a balanced and coherent use of available resources for sustainable territorial development. Natural conditions, well-preserved cultural and historical buildings, cultural facilities, and sports facilities tend to be more beneficial to the tourism landscape. In the study of cultural landscapes, scholars in landscape studies conceptualise tourism as a phenomenon integrated into the landscape and as a development tool (Saxena & Ilbery, 2010). Some aspects of tourism have a fundamental impact on the sustainable use of global resources, including cultural and natural heritage, and neglect of it can lead to conflict between local and non-local stakeholders. How to deal with the relationship between these two (2) groups has become the

key issue in managing these contradictions. The ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism, which encourages community participation, distribution of economic benefits, enjoyment of recreation and recreation, is an important principle for the responsible management of cultural heritage and tourism development (ICOMOS, 2021). Positioning the residents of the tourism landscape in the overall landscape production and allowing them to participate in the entire tourism planning, operation, and management process is the real solution to a win-win contradiction (Prince, 2019; Cheer et al., 2019). The visitor's focus on the attractiveness of the landscape depends on the different values of service that the landscape can provide.

Therefore, scholars have emphasised the tourism evaluation of cultural landscape heritage products and services (Konu, 2015), as well as evaluating travel experiences (Kempiak et al., 2017; Gordon, 2018; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2020) and analysing tourist motivation (Cheer et al., 2019). Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES), a methodological framework for assessing how well an ecosystem can provide "non-material" services to people—such as aesthetic value, educational value, or opportunities for tourism and entertainment—has gained importance in analysing the benefits of landscapes for visitors. Their potential role in landscape planning is gaining momentum (Plieninger et al., 2015). Methods that link land cover information based on ecosystem services (ES) matrices, field survey data, and Geographic Information System (GIS) techniques provide a framework for assessing CES and identifying areas where service provision should be restored and managed (Vrbičanová et al., 2020). Simultaneously, digital technology Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) has been successfully applied in various sub-sectors of the tourism industry, enhancing visitor engagement and offering effective tools for heritage management and conservation by creating immersive visualisations and 3D reconstructions, thereby minimising interference with heritage sites (Guttentag, 2010).

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Data collection and analysis method

Firstly, journal articles related to the management of cultural landscape heritage were searched through the Web of Science, and the keyword selection was designed to cover a broad framework of terms related to the concepts of "landscape", "heritage", "management", "law", etc., to ensure a comprehensive coverage of terms related to the management of cultural landscape heritage. The period is limited to 2000-2024, and the search results provide 60 articles. After selecting the titles and abstracts, the authors reviewed the complete text, removing duplicate articles and selecting Europe and Asia, which have the largest number of cultural landscape heritage sites in the world, for the study. A total of 23 articles were analysed from both interpretative and descriptive perspectives. These articles provide insights into the past and present state of heritage management of cultural landscapes in Asian and European countries.

The third step is to extract data from this literature and encode it in terms of three aspects: legal framework, management methods, and protection measures. Conditions and attributes are classified based on similarity and relevance to form common groups. Based on attribute classification results, different types of management modes and strategies are systematically organised and summarised to form a comprehensive typology (Fig. 3). Finally, by comparing China's existing management and protection regulations with those of Asian and European countries, this paper tries to find the gaps and improve strategies in the protection of cultural landscape heritage in China.



Fig. 3. Process of analysing data

Source: Author, 2024

Materials: Protection of legislation related to China’s cultural landscape

China has not enacted specific or comprehensive resource protection laws to protect and manage cultural landscapes. The existing relevant legislation is mainly formulated under the guidance of the Constitution, including the Environmental Protection Law, the Protection of Cultural Relics, the Regulations on Nature Reserves, the Regulations on Scenic Spots, the Urban and Rural Planning Law, the Regulations on the Protection of famous historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages, the Tourism Law, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China, and the Measures for the Protection and Administration of the Grand Canal Heritage.

The Environmental Protection Law was enacted in 1989 and amended in 2014. As a fundamental law in environmental protection, it provides the basic principles and institutional framework for protecting natural and human heritage. The principles are protection, prevention, comprehensive management, public participation, and responsibility for damage. The environmental impact assessment system has three simultaneous systems: environmental protection target responsibility and assessment system, etc. These principles and systems provide the framework, integrity, and universal protection policies and systems; the definition of the cultural landscape is not clearly defined in this legal text, but culture and nature have always been interdependent, and the protection of natural relics and human relics is often mentioned at the same time in theoretical research and practice. It is generally considered to cover the legal basis of cultural landscape protection. For example, in the definition of "environment" in Article two (2) of the Environmental Protection Law (2014), natural relics and human relics are listed as elements of "environment." In Article 29 two (2), The article interprets "natural relics" as "geological structures of great scientific and cultural value, famous karst caves and fossil distribution areas, glaciers, volcanoes, hot springs, etc."

However, it does not list the extension of human relics. The Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics (2017) provides technical support for protecting natural and cultural relics, including more detailed protection contents and procedures, protection standards, and methods. The law on the Protection of

Cultural Relics clearly takes "protection as the priority, rescue as the first, rational utilisation, and strengthening management" as the policy. The Nature Reserves Ordinance and the Scenic Areas Ordinance are based on the protection of ecology, the protection of natural resources (scenery, water bodies, forest, grass and vegetation, wild animals, etc.), and the protection of biological diversity, and indicate that these protected areas are of ecological, ornamental, cultural or scientific value.

However, both propose, to varying degrees, the delineation of the scope of protection, the limitation of the content and extent of human activities (development), and the sustainable development goal. For example, the Regulations on Nature Reserves follow the "authenticity, integrity, systematism and inherent laws of natural ecosystems, and according to management objectives and effectiveness, naturally protected areas are divided into core areas, buffer areas, and experimental areas according to ecological value and protection intensity." The experimental area can conduct scientific experiments, teaching practices, visits, tours, and human participation in natural activities such as domestication and breeding of rare and endangered wild animals and plants.

Since Canada signed the Convention on Protecting the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1985, China has promulgated regulations and policy documents related to World heritage. In addition to the Regulations on the Protection of the Great Wall, the Measures for the Protection and Administration of the Grand Canal Heritage, the Measures for the Protection and Administration of the World Cultural Heritage, the Measures for the Declaration and Protection and Administration of the World Natural Heritage, Natural and Cultural Heritage (Trial implementation), and the Regulations on the Protection of famous historical and cultural Cities, towns and Villages, 40 of the 57 World Heritage sites in China have been preliminarily counted. Local legislative documents have been issued in the remaining sites, including six(6) World cultural landscape heritage sites. In addition, some World Heritage sites have more than one local law or regulation.

However, these laws and management regulations are biased in the positioning of cultural landscape protection, lack comprehensiveness and operability in content, and cannot accurately regulate the scale of cultural landscape protection and utilisation in practice, which reduces the protection effect (Yue, 2020). At the same time, protection is soft, and many heritage resources are subject to human intervention or destruction. For example, the entire content of the Environmental Protection Law focuses mainly on pollution control, with limited provisions for the protection of natural resources and ecological protection; the contents of the provisions on the repair of immovable cultural relics in the Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics are vague, and the subject of responsibility is unclear. The protection and punishment functions of the legislation are insufficient. The Regulations on Scenic Spots regulate the use of natural animals, plants, and tourists for tourism development. Are facing challenges due to over-protection and over-repair situations that lead to minimal intervention; at the same time, in the cultural landscape tourism industry, overuse, overdevelopment, and homogenisation of construction have caused greater damage to the authenticity of the landscape (Zhou, 2023). For example, in 2019, the CCTV news broadcast criticised the excessive landscape lighting project (*China: Soho.com*, 2019); in 2020, China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development issued a circular on relevant issues, pointing out that many places violated the relevant provisions of the protection planning of historical and cultural cities, damaging the appearance and historical context of ancient cities. There were problems such as deviating from reality, overbuilding "cultural landmarks," and damaging natural landscapes (Department Documents of The State Council China, 2021).

Protection of cultural landscapes in Asian and European countries

From the World Heritage List, we can see that the cultural landscape heritage in European countries accounts for one-half of the total (Brumann & Gfeller, 2022), mainly because the heritage protection movement started in Europe and gradually spread to the world. In particular, the European Landscape

Convention has set a milestone for managing European cultural landscapes. As of 2020, 40 Council of Europe member states have ratified the Convention. The objective of the Convention is to strengthen the conservation, management, and planning of landscapes, to organise European cooperation on landscape issues, and, to some extent, to influence the preservation and management of cultural landscapes worldwide (Olwig, 2019). As a result, European countries have an earlier awareness of heritage protection, and their understanding and research on the concept of cultural landscape has kept pace with the international community (Fig.4) .

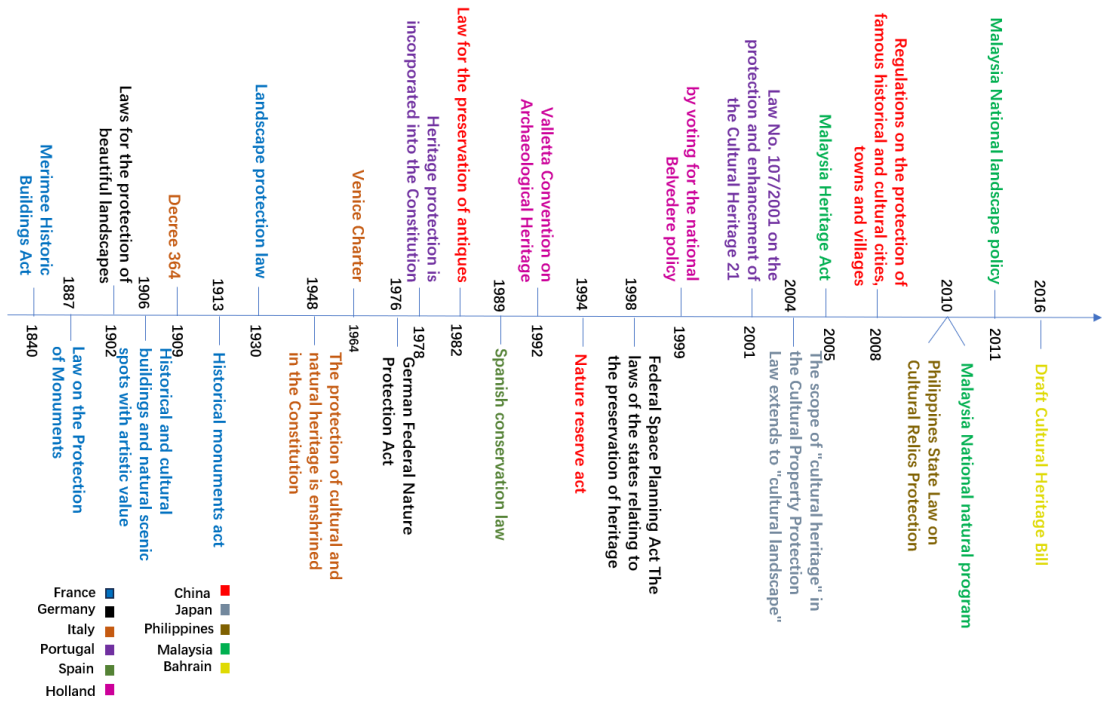


Fig. 4. Timeline of cultural landscape heritage protection in major Asian and European countries

Source: Author, 2024

At the end of the 20th century, the protection of intangible cultural traditions in Asia gradually led to the development trend of protecting world cultural heritage. In the process of conservation, many countries have started to focus on the protection of cultural landscapes. Various regions in Asia have gradually reached a consensus with the World on landscape issues and have begun to realise that "cultural landscapes reflect the organic philosophies and viewpoints of different cultures and should be understood and protected," and a platform for cooperation must be established to seek common ground while reserving differences, and exploration and dialogue have been launched (Singh, 2013; Rössler & Lin, 2018). In December 2005, UNESCO adopted the Hoi and Draft-Best Practices for Conservation in Asia. In October 2005, at the 15th session of the International Council on Monuments and Sites in Xi'an, China, the Xi'an Declaration on the Protection of Historic Buildings, Ancient Sites and the Environment of Historic Areas was adopted. In 2012, South Korea established the "Asian Cultural Landscape Association," aiming to establish a dialogue with the World on protecting the Asian cultural landscape and its heritage based on Asia (Han, 2013). The protection of the Asian cultural landscape contributes to the sustainable development of all mankind, providing an important reference for the protection of World Heritage Sites and contributing to the sustainable development of all mankind (UNESCO, 1992).

Table 2. Law, management and measure on landscape protection in Asian and European countries

Nation	Law	Management	Measure	Type
Italy	1909 - Order 364 1948 - Mandatory incorporation into the Constitution 1964 - Venetian charter	Central to local vertical management The state trains specialised talents.	Education for all Participation in popular organisations	Type A. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + education and promotion combined with protection measures
France	1840 - Merimee Historic Buildings Act 1887 - Protection of Monuments Act 1906 - Law on the Protection of Historical and Cultural Buildings and Natural Scenic Spots of Artistic Value 1913 - Historic Monuments Act 1930 - Landscape Conservation Act	European Day for Cultural Heritage A general census was conducted to register the existing heritage. Protected by the law of decentralisation. Active participation of NGOs (18,000 organisations)	Protect historical buildings: regular restoration and routine maintenance Encourage tourism.	Type B. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + public-private partnership + comprehensive physical protection
Germany	1902 - Law for the Protection of Beautiful Landscapes 1986 - Nature Conservation Act 1976 - German Federal Nature Protection Act 1998 - Revised Federal Space Planning Act State laws relating to heritage protection	The protection of the homeland: Methods include the protection of nature, landscapes, and monuments. The PLENUM project in southern Germany: a bottom-up conservation approach combining nature conservation, agriculture tourism, and leisure	The maintenance and restoration projects of the cultural landscape are supported by the participation of private enterprises, providing financial and technical support. For example, The cultural landscape of the upper Middle Rhine Valley region, the upper middle Rhine Valley region	Type B. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + public-private partnership + comprehensive physical protection
Portugal	2001 - Decree No. 107/2001 on the protection and enhancement of the Cultural heritage 21 This law 2008 - Resolution 142/2008 of the Legal Framework for the Conservation of Nature and Biodiversity, 2019 - National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (PNPOT)30:	The value of cultural heritage is recognised in the Constitution (1978) Landscapes and sites are classified and protected to preserve natural and cultural values.	The Basic Network for Nature Conservation (RFCN) has been established to strengthen clearer rules for the promotion and protection of natural resources and natural and cultural heritage. Defining objectives, strategies, and priorities for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, natural resources, landscape measures, and the development of cultural heritage	Type C. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + comprehensive physical protection measures
Spain	1989 - Nature Conservation Act 2012 - National Cultural Landscape Programme of Spain (PNPC)	The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) divides the management of protected areas into 6 categories based on the interaction between humans and nature (IUCN Protection Areas	High priority is given to raising public awareness of the heritage of the cultural landscape through education and publicity.	Type A. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + education and promotion combined with protection measures

		Category 5 includes cultural landscapes).		
Holland	1992 - Enactment of the Valletta Convention on Archaeological Heritage 1999 - by voting for the national Belvedere policy	The National research program "Conservation and Development of the Archaeological and Historical Landscape of the Netherlands," PDL/BBO defines the core concepts of the policy of the National Beltway, the purpose of "conservation through development," and the three dimensions of the integrated objective	Protection of the 17th century Canal Ring in the Singer Canal in Amsterdam, the Netherlands: The government and local communities have worked together to raise public awareness of the preservation of this heritage through various educational programmes and awareness campaigns such as canal Tours	Type A. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + education and promotion combined with protection measures
Japan	Country laws: Cultural Property Protection Law, Natural Park Law, Forest Law, Landscape Law, and related historical and cultural landscape preservation regulations Local laws: Kyoto Scenery Area Ordinance, Historic Environment Protection Ordinance, Traditional Beauty Preservation Ordinance	Develop a landscape registration system to improve public awareness of protection and landscape value. Conduct a comprehensive survey, classify cultural landscapes in stages according to different selection criteria, and establish a relatively complete data system.	The preservation of cultural landscapes in Japan involves agricultural landscapes, traditional villages and religious shrines, which are passed on and promoted through government subsidies and the support of professional organisations.	Type D. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + key protection of cultural inheritance
Korea	1962 - Cultural Property Protection Act 1997 - Cultural Heritage Charter 2005- Landscape Law	Combining the conservation and sustainable use of natural capital under government control.	Special attention is paid to the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional handicrafts, festival activities and folk customs.	Type D. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + key protection of cultural inheritance
Philippine	2010 - National Cultural Relics Protection Law UNESCO intervenes in technical cooperation with the Ifugao Provincial Government: "Indigenous Spirit" (maximum participation of Indigenous peoples)	Maximum participation of Indigenous peoples	The government and the community work together to maintain cultural continuity through various inheritance activities	Type F. International cooperation + community participation + Key protection of cultural inheritance
Bhutan	2016 - Draft Cultural Heritage Bill The World Heritage Centre provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Bhutan;	Government-leading	UNESCO conducts a series of workshops in support of the Cultural Landscape Initiative in Bhutan and establishes a platform to introduce cultural landscape "as a new conservation concept" in Bhutan.	Type G. International cooperation + government-led approach + education and publicity combined with protection.

Malaysia	1976 Town and Country Planning Act 2005 - National Heritage Act 2010 - National Physical Plan 2 (NPP-2) 2011 - National Landscape Policy The Georgetown Preservation Act Guidelines for the conservation of historic buildings Penang Heritage Conservation (Ahmad, 2013)	Bottom-up conservation. Government agencies: Kuala Lumpur Urban Conservation and Design Group, Penang Conservation Group, Malacca Conservation Group Private institutions: Penang Heritage Foundation, Aceh Mosque Architectural Heritage Committee Charity, Malaysian Heritage Trust	Increase public awareness and participation in conservation through school education, museum displays and media campaigns.	Type E. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + public-private partnership + education and publicity combined protection
China	Environmental Protection Law Regulations on Nature Reserves Measures for the Protection and Administration of World Cultural Heritage Regulations on the Protection of Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns, and Villages 2012-Measures for the Protection and Administration of the Grand Canal Heritage Measures for the Protection and Administration of the Grand Canal Heritage 2017-Protection of Cultural Relics	Local policies under the guidance of national policies: The Regulations on the Protection (Administration) of Cultural Relics and the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities were promulgated by all provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities vested with legislative power and national autonomous areas. In addition, there are also some local regulations on environmental protection, such as Greening Regulations, management Measures for Nature Reserves, Regulations on the protection and management of Cultural landscapes, Regulations on the protection and management of landscape areas, etc.	China's protection measures for cultural landscape heritage include physical protection such as restoration and maintenance, as well as the establishment of protected areas and cultural heritage protection units.	Type A. Comprehensive mandatory legal framework + government-led management + education and promotion combined with protection measures

Source: Author, 2024

As can be seen from the comparison of foreign cultural landscape protection and heritage protection (Table 1), the types of heritage management protection in European and Asian countries are most dominated by state led. The common denominator of these types is that the government highly recognises the value of heritage. European countries have relatively complete national laws and regulations on heritage protection, and the government usually adopts top-down management and protection. The state and the government play a vital role in the protection of cultural relics, and people throughout the country must be aware of the protection of cultural relics. For example, Italy, the country with the largest number of cultural landscape heritage sites in the world, has directly written heritage protection into its constitution. Italy was the first country to propose and enact laws on the protection of cultural heritage and set up "Cultural Heritage Day". The French government has adopted a series of mandatory, encouraging and punitive laws and regulations to ensure the protection and management of heritage. The Asian nation of Japan has expanded the scope of "cultural heritage" to include "cultural landscape" by amending its Cultural Property Protection law (Ikebe, 2012; Singh, 2013). At the same time, Japan's "Natural Park Law", "Forest Law", "Landscape Law", and other relevant historical and cultural landscape protection laws and regulations play a guiding role in the protection of natural and cultural landscapes. The central government of Japan is responsible for protecting the most important parts of the country's historical and cultural heritage. At the same time, local governments have enacted more local regulations through local legislation, such as the Regulations on

Kyoto Style Areas, the Regulations on Historical Environment Protection, and the Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Aesthetics (Wang et al., 2021).

The advantages of the state-led type are that the legal framework is comprehensive and mandatory, which can ensure the consistency and standardisation of cultural landscape protection measures across the country, and mandatory laws and government-led management models can effectively guarantee the implementation of protection measures. Government-led management models usually have sufficient financial and technical support. This type fits well with China's political system. However, overly strict legal frameworks and government-led management models may be inflexible and difficult to adapt to local needs or changes quickly, and the participation of community residents and local organisations may be low, resulting in a lack of local cultural identity and support for conservation measures. The multi-party type of cooperation has access to a wide range of support and resources, including the most advanced international technical assistance; community participation is more responsive to local needs and cultural characteristics and can enhance local cultural identity and popular support for conservation measures. This advantage is worth learning and thinking about in China.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legislative Challenges in Cultural Landscape Heritage Protection: Europe-Major Asian Countries China

In terms of the time of legislation on the protection of landscape heritage, Europe's awareness of legislation on the protection of landscape heritage is earlier than that of Asia, and only Japan has an earlier time. Therefore, Europe's measures are relatively complete and faster than those of Asia. A top-down management model has been formed at the national and local levels. From the interpretation of the definition of cultural landscape heritage, China did not gradually clear until 2000; from the perspective of protection technology and measures, China is still in the initial stage. Regarding protection methods, European countries have conducted in-depth research on cultural landscape heritage, including initial land management research, environmental governance, value assessment, and legislative improvement. Dedicated simultaneously to the operation of digital technologies, it aims to establish, with the help of artificial intelligence, an interdisciplinary approach to the conservation and management of cultural landscape heritage from a framework that promotes the continuous development of horizontal perspectives.

Many cultural landscapes in China today are still under threat. In some places, cultural landscapes are degraded and dying because of unplanned infrastructure development and urbanisation, modernisation of land use technologies, environmental pollution, or unsustainable tourism (Wang, 2022). Elsewhere, especially in rural areas, cultural landscapes are abandoned or poorly managed due to depopulation, ageing populations, and changes in traditional lifestyles and knowledge systems. In addition to human factors, increasing disaster risks and the effects of climate change are posing new and intensifying threats to cultural landscapes everywhere (Zhang, 2020).

Of course, China has already realised the importance of cultural landscape protection and is establishing certain protection mechanisms to face the challenges. For China to move from the glory and crisis of agricultural civilisation and industrial civilisation to ecological civilisation, it is necessary to complete the reconstruction of the new human-land relationship (Han, 2020). It is of more urgent practical significance to actively protect the cultural landscape. Cultural landscape heritage is a social public welfare undertaking for resource protection rather than an economic industry. It is mainly to meet people's higher material and cultural needs and should not be targeted at pursuing economic interests (Wang, 2002; KAYA, 2016; O'Donnell, 2016). To sum up, its protection principles should follow the following points:

(i) Valuing Cultural Landscapes: Human-Nature Interactions and Stakeholder Engagement

The focus of conservation must always be on the value of the cultural landscape and the interaction between man and nature. For the cognition of cultural landscape heritage value, more attention should be paid to the connection with various stakeholders, and the multi-dimensional transformation of heritage value should be realised through the establishment of landscape social networks with human-land relationships as the core. From the unique characteristics of cultural landscapes and the research and experience of cultural landscape heritage abroad, it can be recognised that consensus on cultural and natural values is the key to the conservation and management of cultural landscapes because it highlights the complex interaction between people and the environment. The preservation of ecological and biodiversity values is particularly important in areas with cultural and spiritual values; in argon-forest systems, food, medicinal plants, construction, and production materials must also be adequately protected; on land, long-term sustainable systems must adapt to changing living conditions.

(ii) Collaborative Governance and Inclusive Protection of Cultural Heritage

Protection is inclusive and transparent, and governance is shaped through dialogue and agreement among key stakeholders; governments and people work both ways, and participation is a way to create social cohesion. First, establish a government-led, locally-led, multi-party coordinated protection management system; secondly, systematic investigation and assessment should be carried out to clarify the protection elements, such as the category, scope of protection, protection methods, funding sources, and management measures of public heritage. Thirdly, government management should be unified with the will of the people. In addition, when necessary, a cross-sectoral, cross-regional, and cross-border protection cooperation system can be established.

(iii) Targeted Protection Strategies for Urban and Rural Cultural Landscapes

Protection should be targeted through various classified forms of protection management. The urban cultural landscape should reflect whether there is sufficient "respect" between the block where the cultural landscape is located and the city, and it should not satisfy the maximisation of commercial interests at the cost of destroying the authenticity and integrity. For rural cultural landscapes, it is necessary to coordinate the economic development of residents with natural environment remediation and overall feature protection to retain both the authenticity and the local villagers. In terms of material form, while actively improving the infrastructure of residents, the tangible historical remains should be protected, carefully rebuilt, and scientifically restored; from the aspect of non-material form, the content of the living landscape is clearly defined, and continuity protection is achieved through the cultivation of inheritors.

(iv) Guiding Sustainable Development for Cultural Landscape Preservation

The focus of development is to guide change to preserve the value of the cultural landscape; in other words, in the dynamic equilibrium state of the cultural landscape, sustainable development that ADAPTS to the contemporary environment is sought. On the one hand, it is necessary to protect the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage; on the other hand, it is necessary to moderately carry out the transformation and utilisation in line with contemporary development, and the key to development is how to grasp this "degree." The "degree" should be a slow improvement, voluntary progress. In light of its own national conditions, China should adhere to cultural confidence and the Chinese path, enhance the philosophical and ecological wisdom of China's environment, and build a conservation philosophy and science with Chinese characteristics.

CONCLUSION

The preservation of cultural landscape heritage in China faces challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. While awareness of its importance is increasing, many landscapes remain threatened by urbanisation, environmental degradation, and societal changes. To effectively address these issues, a comprehensive strategy that emphasises collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable practices is essential. This conclusion highlights three key findings on cultural landscape and heritage preservation in China.

Legislative and Institutional Framework. China's approach to cultural landscape heritage preservation is still in its formative stages compared to Europe and Japan, which have established comprehensive legislative frameworks and advanced protection methods. As China clarifies its definition of cultural landscapes and develops its legal mechanisms, it must prioritise creating a more cohesive and effective protection strategy to safeguard these invaluable resources.

Threats and Challenges. Numerous cultural landscapes in China face significant threats from urbanisation, environmental degradation, and social changes, such as depopulation and shifts in traditional lifestyles. Addressing these challenges requires urgent action, including improved management practices and public engagement to foster a greater appreciation for cultural heritage and its ecological significance.

Collaborative and Sustainable Approaches. Future preservation efforts must emphasise collaborative governance and targeted protection strategies that consider both urban and rural contexts. By integrating stakeholder participation, prioritising ecological and cultural values, and guiding sustainable development, China can create a balanced approach to conserving its cultural landscapes, ensuring their integrity and authenticity for future generations.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Wu Yangrui carried out the research and wrote and revised the article; Raziah Ahmad and Amalina Mohd Fauzi conceptualised the central research idea and provided the theoretical framework. Muhamad Solehin Fitry and Faisal Abd Rahman reviewing and suggesting revision of the article.

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