

## Article

# Revitalization or Alienation: Reflections on Continuation of Traditional Culture

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**Abstract:** With urbanization and industrialization, the future of traditional villages and their culture has been discussed extensively. Tourism is an important way to promote economic growth and cultural dissemination as it brings hope to revive traditional villages and local cultures. We explored the role of cultural heritage tourism in the process of cultural dissemination that affects cultural kernel. We conducted a case study of Xunpu Village and obtained textual data through field study and interviews. The results showed that in the process of developing cultural heritage tourism, the traditional culture transmitted outward from Xunpu Village has experienced alienation and absence. The importance of cultural heritage tourism is based on cultural authenticity, but the loss of cultural authenticity in the development of Xunpu Village is not conducive to the development of sustainable tourism and the long-term well-being of the residents.

**Keywords:** Cultural authenticity; Stage effect; Intangible cultural heritage tourism; Xunpu; *Zanhuawei*

## 1. Introduction

Culture is the sum of the values that have developed over time in societies. Culture is on to the next generation and shaped by human beings and the regions in which they live (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). The development of a society contributes to the development of the culture of different regions. Cultural tourism has become a major trend in tourism in recent years. The concept of cultural tourism was proposed as a concept of "traveling partly or wholly to enhance appreciation" (Richards, 1996). Later, the definition of cultural tourism was expanded to "include special interest tourism that seeks and participates in processes of contact with aesthetics, knowledge, novelty and culture" (Stebbins, 1996) and "tourism-oriented to the cultural heritage of a destination or region" (World Tourism Organization, 1997). Cultural heritage refers to the combination of ways of life in the context of cultural tourism, including traditions, customs, places, objects, and artistic expressions, which are developed by society and are passed on from generation to generation (UNESCO, 2008). Cultural heritage tourism, as an alternative type of tourism, offers the opportunity to learn about history and experience the historical process. Representational historical experiences is the key concept of authenticity in cultural heritage tourism (Chhabra, 2005; Park, Choi, & Lee, 2019).

Authenticity comes from experience and feeling (Abarca, 2004; Brida, Disegna, & Osti, 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Therefore, the authenticity of cultural heritage tourism must be based on an authentic historical context or unfold in an authentic historical location and possess original objects (MacCannell, 1973). Authentic cultural heritage experiences are an important development tool for tourism destinations to attract tourists and generate income. Thus, it is essential to promote the sustainability of culture and traditions in the development of cultural heritage tourism (Wight, 1994). Exotic cultures are an important reason for attracting tourists so it is important to preserve the originality of the culture to attract tourists and drive the multifaceted development of the tourist destination.

China's rapid economic development has led to the gradual decline of traditional cultures in many parts of the country (Sun, Jia, & Lu, 2019), ranging from the World Cultural Heritage as defined by UNESCO at the international scale to the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) at the local scale (X. Wang, Liu, Luo, & Li, 2016). As early as 2009, the National Tourism Administration issued the Guiding Opinions of the Ministry of Culture and the National Tourism Administration on Promoting the Combined Development of Culture and Tourism and emphasized the combined development of culture and tourism and integration of culture and tourism. In 2018, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued the "appropriate integration to promote tourism with culture, tourism to highlight the culture through the development of culture and tourism from a broad prospect. Cultural heritage has driven the development of tourism as the cultural and creative industry (Jian-ying, 2023) including accommodation and catering (Zhou &

Chen, 2019). The excessive number of tourists is gradually impacting local cultures sometimes destroying cultural heritage. In terms of cultural alienation, it is needed to cater to popular aesthetics and internet trends. Whether or not cultural heritage tourism is still colored on authenticity, it is important to combine culture and tourism and inherit traditional culture. Thus, we investigated the continuation and mutation of traditional culture in economic tourism development.

**2. Materials and Methods**

*2.1. Methods*

We conducted a case study and text analysis. The data and photos were collected with interviews and observations. In this study, *Zanhuawei* was defined as a women’s wrap around the back of their head and the decoration of the hair with flower buds (Figs. 1(a) and (b)). *Zanhuawei* is divided into (a) local women's style and (b) tourist style. Local women help tourists have *Zanhua* as shown in Fig. 1(c). We used systematic sampling at *Zanhuawei* shops at the entrance of Xunpu Village. We collected 50 *Zanhuawei* shops' opening times, types, items, and their ratios in sales (Table 1). The total number of the shops was 246. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect the experiences and opinions of residents, the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) inheritors, village secretaries, tourists, make-up artists, and photographers (Table 2).



**Fig 1.** (a) Traditional *Zanhuawei* of Xunpu women; (b) mutated *Zanhuawei* for tourist; (c) *Zanhua* for tourist.

**Table 1.** Description of sample stores in this study

categorisation	Operator		Shop source		Opening time		
	Native	Outsider	Tenancy	Ownership	Before 2023	2023–2024	After 2024
Number of shops	31	19	29	21	4	39	7
Subtotal	50		50		50		

**Table 2.** In-depth interview results.

respondents	Age	Number	Background and summary of interviews
Make-up artists	±20	F-1	She is from Guizhou and came to work in March 2024 at the <i>Zanhuawei</i> Photography Studio in Xunpu Village. As far as she knows, the current shop is the owner's second shop in Xunpu Village. The photographers and other make-up artists in the shop also come from all over the country, and they traveled photography before and have rich experience. Before coming to Xunpu Village, she had worked in Guizhou, Wuhan, and Yunnan respectively, and she thinks that the traveling photography industry is "wherever is hot, go there". She thinks this is more promising than staying in a studio. The shop she works in can receive 30 to 100 people a day. She can do five or six to more than 20 a day. Most of the customers choose to wear Netflix make-up and Ching Han clothes. The way customers enter the shop is also divided into online and offline. When customers don't know what clothes to choose, they will choose by asking them about their favorite styles and colors, and will not recommend local traditional dresses

			in particular. She has little understanding of the ICH of Xunpu Village, because, if not, the boss or customers will not choose her.(2024/04/11)
Inheritors of ICH	62	M-2	He has multiple identities, the ICH bearer of Xunpu Village, the only person in Xunpu Village who insists on making traditional fisherwomen's clothes, the earliest person who started to carry out the promotion of ICH in Xunpu Village, a teacher in a school, and the owner of a <i>Zanhuawei</i> shop. He learnt how to make clothes from his uncle when he was a child, and he told us about the time clues and even motives of the great popularity of <i>Zanhuawei</i> in Xunpu. He thinks that tourists nowadays are dressing up and changing the traditional <i>Zanhawei</i> into something else. He talked about the traditional custom of Xunpu Village, " <i>Yi hua dai li</i> "(using flowers to represent etiquette). He believes that the phenomenon of dressing up and <i>Zanhua</i> is a result of "making money". Government agencies have intervened in this phenomenon, but it does not work, and we can only hope that the owner of the hairpin shop guides tourists to choose traditional dress and hairpin style.(2024/04/05)
Village clerk	45±	F-3	She is the secretary of Xunpu Village and has been dedicated to promoting the traditional culture of the village since 2016. She has her own <i>Zanhuawei</i> shop and study base (used to undertake various activities to promote the ICH of Xunpu Village). In addition to traditional costumes, her <i>Zanhuawei</i> shop also has a large number of <i>Qinghanfu</i> (the traditional dress of ancient China represented by the Han Dynasty, also known as <i>Hanfu</i> ) and <i>Mamianqun</i> (also known as "Horse face skirt": an ancient Han female dress, the front and back of the skirt shape like a horse's head, so-called horse face skirt), and when we visited, the secretary was making black colored <i>Zanhuawei</i> . According to the secretary, there are several reasons why tourists mostly choose Qinghanfu and Mamianqun to go with the <i>Zanhua</i> : 1. Zhao Liying <sup>1</sup> wears the modified Hanfu in her publicity, not the traditional fisherwoman's dresses, which makes a big difference in the publicity of the fisherwoman's dresses; 2. Qinghanfu and the Mamianqun with the <i>Zanhuawei</i> are also innovative and a new Chinese style. Unlike traditional clothing may be a little old-fashioned, young people do not like; 3. At present, many of the Xunpu Village travel photography shop, and a photo gallery has a lot of different fashion colors, dopamine color, dark black, which are more attractive to young people, which also makes other shops follow the update because there is no business if you do not innovate. The clerk believes that for the heritage of culture, on the one hand, there is more than just the development of tourism as a path. As early as 2015, there were activities such as ICH in the classroom and community education (teaching children ICH skills such as <i>Zanhuawei</i> , shell carving, etc.), along with the Village Cultural Memory Hall and Summer Holiday Paradise. The earliest group of children who learnt are now in university. On the other hand, the local people have to make a living, and it's good to have such a hot scene in a declining village now. Those grannies don't have to do hard work anymore and can earn money from <i>Zanhua</i> . In addition to the elderly, young people are starting to come back, who know how to operate on the Internet and so on, and who are opening hairpin shops together with their families. The secretary thinks that the craze for hairpins will not subside because many people will come here to take photos, and the locals will come back to take photos when they go to higher education or have a festival event to leave good memories. (2024/04/06)
Photographers on the street	20±	M-4	He is a local of Quanzhou, undergraduate design, after graduation, just in time for Xunpu Village <i>Zanhuawei</i> fever, then came here to do photography. He mainly earns money by soliciting customers and cooperating with merchants. He had heard of Xunpu Village a few years ago, but the fever in Xunpu Village was last year (2023). Hundreds of photography studios and <i>Zanhuawei</i> shops opened here after the fever. He thinks he is not sure how long he will do it, after all, the craze of Xunpu Village will gradually fade away because this year's form is not as good as last year's either. On the one hand, there are more and more photographers coming here to compete; on the other hand, there are not as many people traveling to Xunpu as last year. Most of the ones he has photographed are girls, and there are also boys. Last year there were more girls, this year there were male netizens who came to <i>Zanhuawei</i> , and after the publicity, the number of boys who came to <i>Zanhua</i> also started to increase.(2024/04/06)
	50+	M-5	He is a resident of Quanzhou, and he said that since Zhao Liying <sup>1</sup> came, Xunpu Village had hundreds of <i>Zanhuawei</i> shops all of a sudden. He also took his family to visit the <i>Zanhuawei</i> shops without taking photos, but only with <i>Zanhua</i> . He thinks that the success of Quanzhou's heritage application, it is also a "fever", on the one hand, because of the success of the heritage application, the stars may come to do publicity. On the other hand, because of the

government's support, the government will do a good job of infrastructure, in order to lay the foundation for the development of tourism. He thinks most of the young girls come to Zanhua and take photos. There are boys too, but relatively few. He thinks the *Zanhuawei* is hot, but there are still people who go fishing because not everyone wants to make a living from it. (2024/04/05)

<i>Zanhuawei</i> shop Salesperson	25+	F-6	She is a salesperson at the photography studio, and she said that their studio is a big brand of a national chain and that they moved into Xunpu Village because they were invited by the local government. Their shop is a clan house of local people. They mainly rely on new-style dresses, excellent photographers, make-up artists, and retouchers as well as their own brand effect to attract tourists. (2024/04/06)
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(<sup>1</sup> A famous actress in China)

## 2.2. Case Study

Xunpu Village is located at the mouth of the lower reaches of the Jin River in Quanzhou Bay (Fig. 2) and is a famous fishing village in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, China. The villagers live by the sea and mainly focus on fishing. As the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road, Quanzhou's geographical location, history, and culture have created the uniqueness of Xunpu Village. The history of Xunpu Village is traced back as far as the mid to late Tang Dynasty. With the construction of the Maritime Silk Road, people from the Central Plains moved here to avoid the war and formed the main clans of Xunpu Village today. In the Song Dynasty, the Maritime Silk Road flourished and Quanzhou became the world's largest port. Ancient Arabs came for business and used oyster shells as ballast stone, forming *Kekecuo* ("oyster shell houses" as a traditional local architecture or house). In the Ming Dynasty, Xunpu prospered due to the Quanzhou harbor. Men fish offshore while women fish on the coast to take care of the family. By the Qing Dynasty, due to the influence of the coastal war and the ban on going to sea, Quanzhou's social economy suffered a serious blow, and a large number of fishing village residents moved to Southeast Asia to live. In 1958, Xunpu Village came under the jurisdiction of Quanzhou Donghai Community, the prosperity of Quanzhou Harbour fell, and Xunpu Village gradually declined (Chang & Zheng, 2020).

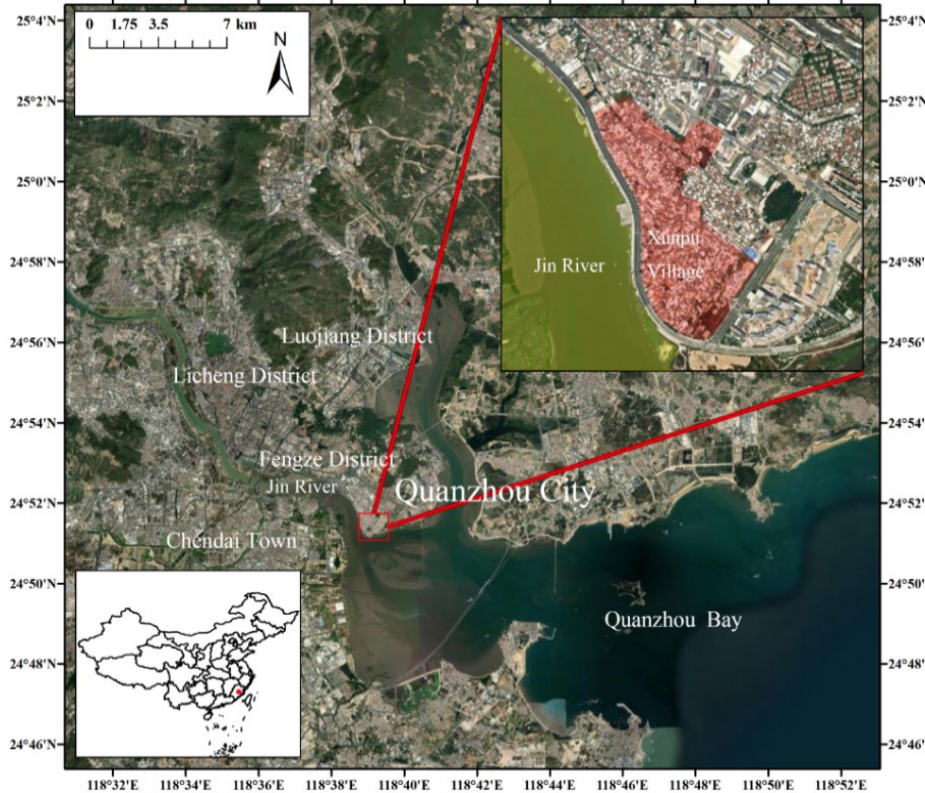


Fig. 2 Study area.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Xunpu Women

The unique method of fishing villages makes the women take the main responsibility of children and family. Xunpu women are one of the three major fisherwomen in Fujian Province and are called the "Daughters of the Sea". The most distinctive feature of the Xunpu women is known as *Zanhuawei*. *Zanhuawei* not only expresses women's nature of loving beauty, but more importantly, the beautiful qualities of strength, diligence, bravery, and optimism. Xunpu women grow their hair from an early age, and when they are 11 or 12 years old, their hair is coiled behind their heads, tied with a red cord, and combed into a bun, then put on a bone headdress. "Zanhuawei" uses the buds of fresh flowers to form a wreath, which is worn behind the head with the hair bun as the center of the wreath, followed by inserting several large red and peach flowers (later developed into silk flowers and fake flowers) symmetrically around the center of the headdress, and inserting a gold or silver hairpin or a comb (Shen).

*"During the Song and Yuan dynasties, there was an Arab called Pu Shougeng, who brought three kinds of flowers, which were the main varieties of Zanhuawei at that time, namely, the hinoki flower, the vegetal flower, and the jasmine flower."* (M-2) (Table 2).

The popularity of wearing flowers has driven the economy of Xunpu village, made the old and declining fishing village space full of new opportunities, and more importantly, strengthened the public's cognitive connection between "Zanhuawei" and "Xunpu Village". However, when such distorted stereotypes spread, how much cultural authenticity remains?

*"In the past, we actually did, and it was the custom of our Xunpu women – Yi hua dai li."* (M-2) (Table 2).

According to the inheritors of ICH, the connotation of "Yi hua dai li" means that flowers are used to represent and replace rituals. In Xunpu, whenever there is a happy event or funeral at home, the host family sends flowers to friends and relatives who come to offer condolences. The number of flowers varies according to the proximity of the family. The closer the family, the more flowers. On the day of the wedding or funeral, guests come to the feast wearing the flowers given by the host. The guests compare the number of flowers and discover that the hosts and guests have different perceptions of how close they are to each other.

*"So many people used to fight over the number of flowers, and they usually said, is our relationship just only worth such flowers?"* (M-2) (Table 2).

*Zanhuawei* of Xunpu Village represents the nature of Xunpu women's love for beauty but more importantly and a unique etiquette of social interaction, which embodies the mode of interaction between people and wisdom of early Xunpu society.

#### 3.2. Cultural Tourism

*Zanhuawei*, a unique custom of Xunpu women, first originated in the Song Dynasty. However, the use of *Zanhuawei* in cultural tourism was not easy so needs to be conducted in different stages of development.

The inheritors of ICH said that *"during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, the Zanhuawei, was regarded as the "Four Olds" (Old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits) and was forced to disappear, and it was not until the end of the Cultural Revolution that the women of Xunpu Village began to put on Zanhuawei, again"* (M-2) (Table 2).

With the reform and opening up in 1978, young people pursued fashionable clothes to catch up with the trends. Thus, only a few old people continued to *Zanhuawei* and wore fisherwomen's costumes. The only maker of fisherwomen's costumes was M-2, so the tradition of fisherwomen's costumes and *Zanhuawei* has declined. In 2004, the Quanzhou government began to pay attention to the protection of traditional culture and declared the Xunpu lady custom as national ICH. They promoted the traditional culture of Xunpu Village through various activities. They set up the "Grandma's Waist Drum Team" (in which grandmothers in Xunpu Village wear traditional costumes, *Zanhuawei*, and participate in various activities) and wrote Xunpu women's customs in textbooks. Studies were conducted to teach children flower-pinning, shell-carving, and other traditional skills. In 2008, the Xunpu lady custom was listed in the second batch of the national ICH and approved by the State Council. In 2018, the first "Haisi-Xunpu" Folk Culture and Tourism Festival was launched in Zhenwu Temple Square. In response to the call of "One Belt, One Road", Fengze District has explored the cultural tourism resources of Haisi and created three major cultural tourism brands "Haisi, Xunpu Women, and South Shaolin". They attracted a large number of experts, scholars, artists, and netizens to visit Xunpu Village.

*"4-5 years ago, that is, 2019-2020, the Zanhuawei has been a small-scale popular in Quanzhou. At that time, there were all many people coming to have fun, and it slowly caught fire during the epidemic, almost three days or five days to open a Zanhuawei shop"* (M-2) (Table 2).

However, the COVID-19 declined the tourism in Xunpu Village. Economic and tourism development are important to revitalize such villages. Xunpu Village is a small fishing village and has come to life owing to cultural tourism. At the end of 2022, the Chinese government lifted the ban on quarantine which made people travel again. In 2023, the local cultural tourism company invited the film star Zhao Liying to shoot the opening cover of the magazine "Uptown Shih" with the theme of Quanzhou Wulin

culture and Xunpu lady styling. The pictures and phrases of "Zanhuawei", "Xunpu women", and " Zhao Liying same style " were popular on social platforms (D. Wang & Zhu). Under the influence of the effect, many celebrities visited Xunpu Village to shoot "Zhao Liying's same style" and uploaded it to social media showing "Being a Xunpu Woman for a Day" and "Zanhuawei in This Life, Pretty in the Next Life". With the addition of the network effect, the development of tourism and the *Zanhuawei* industry in Xunpu has been promoted. The number of *Zanhuawei* shops has increased at a rate of three a day throughout Xunpu Village, and almost all of them have been turned into places for *Zanhuawei*. The number of *Zanhuawei* shops in Xunpu Village as of April 2024 was 246. The number of shops providing shuttle buses, shared bicycles, and visitor service centers also increased.

*"At first, it was just my shop, but now it's all of them."* (M-2) (Table 2).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Loss of Cultural Authenticity: *Zanhuawei*

Cultural heritage tourism in Xunpu Village in terms of economic development is successful. In less than two years, housing rentals have increased tenfold and the number of *Zanhuawei* shops has grown from 4 or 5 to 300. The local government and the Cultural and Tourism Corporation have promoted tourism and economic development through the exploration of local cultural connotations and traditional customs. The popularity of *Zanhuawei* is partly due to its unique traditional cultural connotation, but more importantly, this cultural connotation is presented in an externalized form. The advertisement has been updated to combine new aesthetics and industries.

However, the decline of its cultural authenticity is obvious. A large number of tourists visit the village to experience *Zanhuawei* turning Xunpu Village into a "*Zanhuawei* women's factory". They upload pictures of clothes, make-up, and hairpins on social media. Each "production workshop" has a standard behavioral pattern. Even with many tourists, residents are not interested in knowing the history of Xunpu Village, and no one tells about the origin of the *Kekecuo* and the meaning of the *Zanhuawei*. The disclosure of *Zanhuawei* also exposes Xunpu Village to a spillover effect. Following the *Zanhuawei* shops in Xunpu Village, other provinces of China imitate the style of *Zanhuawei*, which means people do not need to visit Xunpu Village. Authenticity in cultural heritage tourism contains experience and feeling (Abarca, 2004; Brida et al., 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Thus, the authenticity of cultural heritage tourism must be based on an authentic historical context and an authentic historical location (MacCannell, 1973). Xunpu Village has been losing its cultural authenticity in the development of cultural heritage tourism. *Zanhuawei* has only become a symbol to follow the trends, and the important connotations such as the traditional customs and wisdom of social interaction inherited from the people of Xunpu have been lost.

### 4.2 Cultural Communication

Cultural communication is mediated by cultural information in the form of human communication (Xin, 2008). The arrival of the 5G era has ushered short video explosion. The development of cultural tourism and the construction of the collective imagination cannot be separated from the dissemination of social media. In Xunpu Village, although there have been a variety of shows demonstrating Xunpu women's culture for a long time, it has not inspired tourists to visit the village. Zhao Liying's cover shoot for a magazine with hairpins made "*Zanhuawei* of Xunpu" appear in public, and the public began to realize it. Without Zhao Liying's effect, it might not be able to make the collective imagination. Influencers experienced the whole process of hairpin carding in Xunpu Village, uploaded their videos, and attracted the public to experience it. Netizens praised the blogger's *Zanhuawei* styling and left relevant information such as location information, prices, and shop options. Immediately after that, netizens' messages expressed their desire to visit the village. Then, emphathies of the desire were expressed. Step by step, netizens changed from bystanders to participants, and from individual will to collective will to visit (D. Wang & Zhu, 2024). Women visited Xunpu Village and uploaded their hairpin experience and photos to gain praise from others. This endless cycle of communication has led to the popularity of the *Zanhuawei* in Xunpu Village.

The current communication of vernacular culture places too much emphasis on the economic benefits, which makes cultural communication separate from the true appearance of daily life (Sha, 2015). Not all *Zanhuawei* shops in Xunpu Village were spontaneously formed.

*"We have the latest models of dresses here, which can be paired with a hairpin. It is different from other places."* (F-6) (Table 2).

They use their new dresses as selling points to attract tourists to take *Zanhuawei* portraits. Making tourists spend money is more important for the shops than disseminating the traditional culture of Xunpu.

*"People want to live well, then what kind of tourists like, we will do it accordingly, otherwise no one will come."* (F-3) (Table 2).

This shows that in the process of developing cultural tourism, the economy is more important, and *Zanhuawei* of Xunpu Village is also orientated towards economic development.

#### 4.3. Variation of ICH

The variation of the ICH traditional culture is inevitable in the development of ICH tourism. According to the inheritor, traditional Xunpu women do not pin flowers every day because flowers are expensive. The flowers are decorated on women's hair for banquets. However, local old women pinned flowers every day. The original purpose of flower pinning was ignored by them for marketing, and tourists indulge themselves as protagonists. Tourists in Xunpu Village choose a preferred *Zanhuawei* shop, change into their favorite clothes and make-up, choose a photographer, follow the recommendation of the photographer and the businessmen, and go to the "famous" and "photographed" Mazu temple, *Kekecuo*, and the harbor to take photographs. Xunpu Village is no longer the original small fishing village but is transformed into a multi-party place to attract tourists to spend money and drive economic growth. Cultural heritage tourism has an alienating effect on the cultural core in cultural transmission. Residents pay more attention to the economic income brought by tourism than to the dissemination of culture by developing tourism. Tourists choose their preferred form of *Zanhuawei* and constantly update and improve the colors of *Zanhuawei*. Therefore, the core of the ICH has changed.

### 5. Conclusions

We examined the continuation and mutation of traditional culture in the process of economic development. In social development, economic development is essential. However, it is important to help traditional villages and their cultures revive and develop. ICH tourism revitalizes such villages with the development of tourism. Residents need to understand cultural heritage and preservation as culture is the root and soul of villages. To promote cultural protection and rejuvenate rural villages through the development of cultural heritage tourism, sustainable development must be considered. However, it is needed to consider the effect of economic development that may affect the village's culture and heritage inappropriately.

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