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Research on the Design of Hakka Cultural Landscape in Dinghu Di Village Based on the Protection of Ancient Villages

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Dicun Village in Dinghu, Zhaoqing, drawing on the successful practices of protecting ancient trees and harmonizing ecological landscapes in the ancient village of Jiaoyuan. It explores the protection and sustainable development of Hakka villages. Through literature analysis, field research, and design practice, the paper proposes a landscape design strategy centered on ancient tree protection, infused with Hakka culture, and driven by ecological tourism. This appro ach aims to address the conflict between cultural heritage and economic development, thereby promoting rural revitalization. The study emphasizes a low-cost micro-renovation strategy, integrating plant resources, water systems, and folk activities to create a rural landscape system that combines ecological benefits with cultural identity.

Keywords: Dinghu Di Village, Hakka culture, ancient tree protection, ecological landscape, rural revitalization.

1. Introduction

The 2025 Central Document No.1 explicitly proposes advancing the construction of characteristic protection zones for traditional villages, emphasizing the preservation, inheritance, and revitalization of rural cultural heritage. This provides policy guidance for revitalizing ancient villages. During urbanization, these historic settlements face challenges such as abandoned buildings due to population outflow, weakened cultural identity among younger generations, and inefficient use of ecological resources. Successful revitalization cases (e.g., Hunan's "Reviving Old Houses" initiative and Henan's Yidoushui Village cultural tourism revitalization) demonstrate that revitalizing ancient villages can effectively activate idle resources, preserve local culture, and achieve a balance between conservation and development. As cultural "gene banks" carrying nostalgic memories, ancient villages can drive cultural inheritance and economic growth through resource revitalization, supporting rural revitalization strategies. Dinghu Di Village in Zhaoqing, a typical Lingnan Hakka settlement, boasts abundant ancient.

2. The Current Situation and Problems of Village Resources

(1) Resource characteristics

Historical Resources: Established in 1372 during the Hongwu reign of the Ming Dynasty, the village spans approximately 126,000 square meters. It preserves 2,200 square meters of Ming and Qing dynasty architectural heritage, including the Liang Clan Ancestral Hall and Su Zhenren Shrine. The Liang Clan Ancestral Hall features a Ming-era stone archway inscribed with "Achievements in Tongzhou". The western forest area boasts 56 ancient trees over 100 years old, such as a 550-year-old May tea tree and a 620-year-old banyan tree. In 2020, it was awarded the title of "Guangdong Forest Village", and in 2021, it was recognized as the "First Village of Lingnan Ancient Trees". (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Face to face

Figure 2. Anfu Water Street

Water resources: There are natural streams or ponds in the region, forming a wetland ecological base, and natural water systems such as Anfu Water Street pass through the village, which has both ecological and landscape value.

Cultural heritage: historical buildings in Jiaoyuan natural village (such as Longxi Academy and ancestral hall, ancient well), folk traditions (such as festivals and handicrafts) cover intangible cultural heritage such as Hakka architecture, traditional festivals and planting skills, which need to be

revitalized.

(2) Existing problems

Cultural disconnection: the younger generation has insufficient knowledge of Hakka customs and low participation in traditional activities.

Ecological pressure: the hard paving around some ancient trees affects the growth of roots, and the problem of water pollution is prominent.

Homogenization of development: the existing tourism projects lack characteristics and fail to highlight the core advantages of "Hakka + ecology".

3. Design Strategy and Practice

(1) Protection of ancient trees and ecological restoration

Graded protection mechanism: Following the model of the Ancient Tree Park in Jiaoyuan Village, three levels of protected areas are designated. The core area, featuring a 450-year-old banyan tree, is equipped with permeable paving and fencing. The buffer area, home to century-old fig trees, features a Cultural Square under the Trees with pebble paths and rest facilities. The coordination area, along the water street, is planted with native shrubs to restore the riverbank ecosystem.

Application of ecological technology: SWOT analysis was used to evaluate the health status of ancient trees, and BIM technology was introduced to simulate the coordination between root growth and landscape layout.

(2) Hakka culture revitalization design

Space narrative: Interactive explanatory signs are set up along the water street, and QR codes are linked to Hakka mountain songs and related cultural video materials; idle houses are transformed into experience Spaces for Duan inkstone carving and steamed zongzi making, and tourists can participate in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage skills.

Festival empowerment: The "Ancient Tree Blessing Festival" was planned to integrate Hakka mountain song performance and enhance the cultural pride of villagers.

(3) Sustainable tourism development

The one core, two belts layout: The ecological leisure core, centered around ancient banyan trees, extends to the surrounding water systems and farmlands, developing agrarian experience projects; the cultural experience belt connects the walled houses and steamed leaf plantations, designing educational study routes; the natural sightseeing belt, based on the terraced fields of Jitie Village, features scenic walkways and photography spots.

Community participation mechanism: "Villagers Cultural Protection Group" was established to encourage villagers to participate in tourism services through the dividend system.

4. Implementation Results and Discussion

(1) Stage results

The conceptual design for Jiti Village has been finalized, encompassing spatial optimization, preservation of traditional architecture, integration of local industries (including homestay clusters and specialty agricultural experience zones), and infrastructure upgrades (sewage systems and leisure trails). Guided by the core principles of "ecological livability, cultural preservation, and industrial synergy," this blueprint establishes the village's comprehensive development framework and functional zoning. (Fig. 4)

Figure 3. Planned floor plan (part)

Figure 4. Reconstruction effect of Anfu Water Street

Formulate the renovation plan for the ancient tree park with the goal of "protecting the ancient trees and activating the functions of the park". The plan includes the installation of the ancient tree health monitoring system, the removal of illegal buildings around the park, the restoration of vegetation, the setting up of the viewing platform and the science popularization board, and the integration of the cultural elements of the ancient tree legend, which takes into account the ecological protection and the public leisure needs.

The Dicun Village resource survey report was completed through field surveys, villager interviews, literature review, and remote sensing image analysis. This study systematically examined the village's natural resources (topography, water systems, vegetation), cultural resources (traditional architecture, folk customs), industrial resources (agricultural cultivation, specialty handicrafts), and socio-economic conditions (population structure, infrastructure). The findings revealed that while the village possesses abundant ecological and cultural resources, its industries exhibit homogenization and infrastructure remains underdeveloped. These conclusions provide foundational data support for subsequent planning.

The Anfu Water Street renovation project will cover a 500-meter stretch along the waterway, focusing on three key initiatives: (1) Facade restoration with traditional white walls and black tiles to revive the water town's heritage, (2) River dredging and bank rehabilitation, and (3) Development of waterfront docks, leisure plazas, and cultural-entertainment spaces. Infrastructure upgrades include pedestrian pathways and lighting systems. These efforts aim to enhance the water street's visual appeal and commercial vitality, ultimately establishing the "Dinghu Water Culture Experience District".

(2) Challenges and optimization

Capital constraints: The budget of the project is limited, so low-cost nodes should be implemented first, such as using waste building materials to transform landscape features.

Technology adaptation: there is a deviation between BIM model and field terrain, so the 3D calibration is carried out jointly with the GIS team of the university.

Long-term management: It is suggested that the government include Dicun into the support scope of "100,000 projects" and establish a "cultural protection fund" to guarantee operation and maintenance.

5. Conclusion

Traditional villages, as the "gene bank" of China's rural culture, make the protection of rural landscapes a core issue today. The challenge lies in how traditional villages, having once flourished, can coexist with contemporary civilization amid their current decline, which is a key challenge in rural revitalization. Rural landscapes are composite systems formed by the integration of specific regional natural conditions and agrarian civilization, encompassing material elements such as villages and farmlands, as well as rural culture, with characteristics like regional adaptability. Their development has progressed through stages of natural settlement, feng shui symbolism, and contemporary revitalization. The protection of traditional villages has expanded from the early rescue documentation of individual buildings to comprehensive preservation, living inheritance, and cluster development. Rural landscapes form the foundation for the development of traditional villages, while traditional landscapes serve as the spiritual core of rural landscapes. As an important village in Dinghu Mountain, a key ecological protection area in the Pearl River Delta, Dicun has seen revitalization in recent years due to the tourism development of Dinghu Mountain and the construction of rural revitalization demonstration zones. The protection and development of Dicun should be based on "ecology as the foundation and culture as the soul," leveraging micro-renovation strategies to achieve resource revitalization. Notably, the integration of Dicun's archways, Fu'an Water Street, ancient alleys, cultural wells, and the Four Small Gardens has achieved the harmonious coexistence of "scenery and village," driving rural revitalization. This research proposal provides a replicable protection model for Hakka villages and offers theoretical support for building cultural confidence and transforming ecological values in rural revitalization. In the future, further exploration of digital technology applications in rural landscapes is needed to promote the transformation of traditional villages into "smart cultural ecological communities."

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