Aesthetic Values and Creation Strategies of Plant Landscape in Dong Villages, Sanjiang County, Guangxi

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Abstract. As an important element in village settlement space, plants are also the major resource constituting a settlement environment in Dong Villages, Sanjiang County, Guangxi. Plant landscape in Dong Villages, Sanjiang County is closely associated with people’s life in Dong Villages and it is presented by mountain forests, rice fields, gardens, houses and the like, becoming an important constituent in national culture of Dong Nationality. Through research on regional characteristics of plant landscape in Dong Villages, Guangxi and presentation of its aesthetic features concerning forms, colors and artistic conceptions, relevant references and suggestions can be provided for inheritance of plant landscape culture of Dong Nationality as well as creation of village landscape.

Keywords: Dong Villages, Plant Landscape, Creation

1. Introduction

As explained in Baidu Baike, plant landscape refers to different plant community scenes differing in forest forms, seasonal aspects, colors and postures, which are constituted of natural or man-planted plants of different types including arbor, shrub, grass, and ancient and rare trees. It is mainly an image presented with vegetation, plant communities and plant individuals in the nature, which is transmitted to the cerebral cortex through human perception to generate a real feeling and imagination of beauty. Plant landscape also involves the artificial landscape which is created based on plant themes. It is thus clear that plant landscape is one of the ways for people to perceive “beautiful landscape”.

Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County enjoys the largest Dong population in Guangxi or even the whole country. Subject to landforms like low mountains, river valleys and hills, it enjoys green ridges, rich plants and abundant forestry resources. The river valleys surrounded by mountains present plant landscape distinct in layers and well-spaced sights, bringing unique features to the landscape in Dong villages.

2. Types of Plant Landscape in Sanjiang Dong Villages

2.1. Main Types of Plants in Sanjiang Dong Villages

The mankind always lives a life closely associated with the natural ecologic environment. Throughout long-term living and laboring, Dong people have established interactive dependence with natural
plants and made full use of natural advantages to realize self-sufficiency. In addition, the plant landscape with distinct regional features takes shape, presenting a picturesque land of idyllic beauty.

Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County is located at an junction of Hunan, Guangxi and Guizhou, enjoying a subtropical Nanling moist climate and a mountainous valley climate. Throughout the year, its temperature remains within 17°C-19°C, with abundant rainfall, forests and grass. In line with regional vertical distribution features, forest vegetation with distinct layers has taken shape. Arbors include cedar, pine tree, maple, beech, paulownia, wild jujube, camphor tree, Phoebe zhennan, sweet gum, Betula luminifera, etc. Shrubs include masson pine, cuckoo, banana shrub, bougainvillea spectabilis, myrtle, oleander, pomegranate, etc. Grass includes Miscanthus floridulus, Diranopteris dichotoma, Arundinella anomala, Juncus effuses, Peganalaum harmala, cogon, etc. Bamboos include moso bamboo, shoot bamboo, golden bamboo, black bamboo, fernleaf hedge bamboo, reed bamboo, and thin tube bamboo. Vines include grape vine, kudzu vine, gourd vine, Chinese fevervine, Ficus pumila, rhizoma smilacis glabrae, etc. Ferns include mountain fern, floating fern, sour fern, etc. Fungi include agaric, agrocybe cylin dracea, collybia albuminosa, phoenix mushroom, roadside fungus, umbrella fungus, lucid ganoderma, etc. In addition, there are plants of paddies, fiber crops, vegetables and seeds, contributing to a full range of varieties.

2.2. Types of Plant Landscape in Sanjiang Dong Villages

Hidden amid green hills and blue rivers of Sanjiang County, traditional Dong villages were far from the quick paces of modern city life. However, with advancing urbanization and immigration of more and more external populations, Dong Nationality has to encounter intensified stress in life. Under this background, natural mountainous resources have been inevitably overused, and sloping fields have turned to cultivation lands. No restrictions were imposed on forestry plant cutting. As a result, a lot of plants were put at the edge of extinction, together with ecological deterioration and people’s suffering from retaliatory natural disasters. All these setbacks made Dong people realize the importance of protection and development besides benefiting from the resources in mountains and forests. At present, thanks to endless reconstruction and adaption, Dong people have gradually created ecologic space plant landscape centered on natural mountains and forests, production space plant landscape centered on rice fields and gardens, as well as living space plant landscape centered on village courtyards [1].

2.2.1. Ecologic Space Plant Landscape.

Ecologic space plant landscape mainly refers to the plant landscape which naturally takes shape and gets preserved under generations of changes without too much man-made interference. Based on natural mountains and forests, it becomes a background and natural refuge of Dong villages. Continuous mountains with prosperous forests set off Dong villages, bringing amazing visual beauty. In addition, featuring water and soil maintenance, climate regulation, wind prevention and sand fixation, water conservation and bio-diversity protection, natural mountains and forests can effectively prevent the occurrence of natural disasters. It is fair to say that ecologic space plant landscape is of crucial significance for future development of Dong villages. On the one side, it provides physical resources such as water, wood, stone and medicine for Dong villages and serves the population there in production and life. On the other side, it grants this place with spiritual beliefs, making Dong people grateful for the natural gifts and bringing them the belief of “nature worship”. With fast development of the society, tourism and rehabilitation concerning the ecologic space plant landscape will be vigorously promoted in the future [2].

Ecologic space plant landscape of Dong villages involves virgin forest, protection forest, Fengshui forest, lake afforestation, mountain afforestation, etc. Distant hills around Dong villages mainly contain original forest vegetation, forming a distant view of villages. The back mountains of Dong villages stand sheet-like plant communities constituted of cedar, paper mulberry, masson pine and tea trees, as well as artificially planted economic forests. Both sides of river channels on the bottom of Dong villages are marked by coastal plant landscape mainly made of moso bamboo, cedar and wild
Ischaemum indicum. The front face of Dong villages presents the production space plant landscape centered on farmlands. This arrangement reflects Dong people’s space planning view formed under joint influences of natural and human factors: “plant crops on flat plains in front of village, plant trees on green mountains behind village”.

2.2.2. Production Space Plant Landscape.
Production space mainly refers to areas and places where villagers do farm work. As an important constituent environment for people to get close to the nature, such space also enables humans to recreate the nature. According to types, production space can be classified into farmland, vegetable garden, pond, economic forest, etc [3].

Farmlands account for a large proportion in village constituents. Sanjiang Dong villages are surrounded by mountains rising one after another and a chain of undulating hills, with abundant water resource and village layout varying with mountainous environments. Village farmlands on valley plains are mainly shaped like scattered and disperse blocks which are pieced into irregular geometric graphics. Village farmlands on mountains have ridges built in line with terrain changes, a dug irrigation system and layered terraces. Farm crops like rice, wheat, corn, soybean and potatoes as well as economic crops like cotton, tea, oil tea and tung trees are planted. Various crops present different plant landscape styles in different seasons. In addition, farmland edges can be decorated with a bit of small arbors.

2.2.3. Living Space Plant Landscape.
Living space in villages is most frequently used by villagers in life as it can provide them with space for recreation, communication and sports. Besides life necessities, the major plant landscape shall be able to beautify the villages.

Both sides of roads outside villages mainly are plants like sand-skin trees, sweet-scented osmanthus trees and Ficus microcarpa. In the villages, villagers plant flowers, trees, fruits, vegetables and medicines in scattered and free plots such as lanes, grooves and slopes. Flowers and trees include bougainvillea spectabilis, Chinese rose, jasmine, camellia, etc. Fruits and vegetables mainly include pomegranate, pear, persimmon tree, pepper, Chinese chives, eggplant, tomato, etc. Medicines include cactus, radix polygonati officinalis, rhizoma smilacis glabrae, etc. Some villages plant climbing vine plants on walls of courtyards, such as passion fruit towel gourd, grape, gourd, chayote and Chinese redbud, managing to make people feel the strong sense of life and beautiful living environment while entering the villages.

3. Aesthetic Values of Plant Landscape in Dong Villages

3.1. Beauty of Forms
Plant landscape is essentially different from artificial landscape, as it manifests beauty of both the natural forms and the artificial decoration [4]. Located in mountains and hills, Sanjiang Dong villages only have a few of plains, with dense buildings and narrow, centralized streets and lanes. Therefore, small plants with unique forms, like small arbors, shrubs and herbs, are selected to realize visual guidance. Village accesses are often decorated with ancient trees which are verdant, strong and old, or thick in shade and shaped like a canopy. In one word, their splendid appearance can leave a profound impression and make them patron saint trees for villages.

3.2. Beauty of Colors
Beauty of plant colors can be traced to poems of ancient Chinese men of letters. For example, “the emerald lotus leaves reach as far as where water and skies meet, and lotus blossoms bathing in sunshine exhibit a distinctive dazzling pink”; “pink sets off the former rainfall, the green willow carries morning mist”; “beauty of spring in the garden cannot be sealed, look at the red plum branch extending out over the wall”, etc.
With a high vegetation coverage rate, Sanjiang Dong villages take green plants as the background and major color tone. Abundant layers are created in the space by green colors from far to near: black green, blue green, bright green, dark green and light green. Approaching the villages, we can find more abundant types of plants: evergreens matched with deciduous plants, foliage plants matched with fruit effect plants, and aquatic plants matched with land plants, which fully present colors of branches, leaves, flowers and fruits of plants and make people feel how energetic the natural plants are as time and seasons go.

3.3. Beauty of Artistic Conceptions
As a living landscape element, plants convey infinite spiritual pursuits with finite scenes, reflecting the beauty of artistic conceptions. Sanjiang Dong villages look like a land of idyllic beauty thanks to the endless plant landscape. From the bottom of heart, people always yearn for the nature with peace and beauty. With villages surrounded by plants, people here sense styles of plants and the nature. On contrast, in busy cities full of high buildings and cars, plants are only used for decoration and can never convey the artistic conception that “a bunch of peach flowers blossoms freely. Dark red or light red, which one do you prefer?”

4. Regional Strategies for Creation of Plant Landscape in Sanjiang Dong Villages
Modernization of Sanjiang Dong villages may have been slowed down, while thanks to this, their appearance is not destroyed by cities developing at a top speed. Instead, local natural environments and national culture have been effectively protected, with maintenance of regional features. Therefore, the fundamental strategy is to guarantee regional features during creation of plant landscape in Dong villages.

4.1. Maintain Rural Advantages of Plant Landscape
Rural plants are of absolute advantages in planning design of plant landscape in Dong villages. As local advantaged species, rural plants can be better maintained and managed thanks to their adaptability to local environments and stress resistance, so maintenance cost can be saved [5]. While choosing the type of plant landscape during creation of the village plant landscape, we need to consider both economic and landscape effects of village plants. In addition, it is necessary to match trees with different forms, colors and types according to atmospheres created for space landscape of different types. Rural plants in Sanjiang County include many edible and medicinal plants like cedar and oil tea. During landscape creation, we shall make full use of these plants and grant economic benefits to village plant landscape, so as to reduce cost in creation and maintenance.

4.2. Excavate Cultural Cores of Plant Landscape
Cultural properties of plant landscape are embodied by cultural connotations and creation techniques of plants [6]. People often personate plants and grant them with unique qualities and symbolic meanings. Villagers play a dominant role in villages. Through long-term production and living, impressive Dong cultural styles have taken shape in the villages, such as Dong Ka Lau and festival of fireworks. While matching the plant landscape, we shall serve the culture, further excavate cultural properties of plant landscape and integrate the plant landscape with functional space, so as to realize interactions between people and plants and space and make people realize something in life and experience. Upholding the nature deeply, villagers in Sanjiang Dong villages manage to protect a lot of ancient trees and mountainous forests thanks to the cultural consciousness.

4.3. Construct Diversified Space of Plant Landscape
In order to know characteristics of different types of plants, we shall select plants featuring different varieties and forms during planning and design of village plant landscape. Through selection and matching of plants, the plant landscape is created to present people an artistic connotation full of ecologic, natural and diversified elements. Plants can be applied to any plane in the Dong village space.
For example, junctions of ground cover and short shrubs can be located at village edges, implying deepening of the space. Plants with different heights and density can bring different shielding effects in the village space. During selection and matching of plant landscape, it is necessary to highlight diversity of village plant landscape. Through scientific and rational combination and utilization of unique mountain topography in Dong villages during construction of plant landscape communities, the stable, rational three-layer space marked by high, medium and low levels can be constructed to manifest characteristics of Dong nationality.

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