Study on Tourism Upgrade of Ancient Villages in Foshan City Based on Eco-Museum Theory

Taking Fengjian Ancient Village in Xingtan Town, Shunde District, Foshan City as an Example*

Chunshu Liang
Guangzhou College of Technology and Business
Guangzhou, China

Xuyuan Chen
Guangzhou College of Technology and Business
Guangzhou, China

Abstract—Foshan has always been attaching great importance to the revitalization and upgrade of ancient villages. However, the revitalized ancient villages have the problem of insufficient vitality. Developing tourism in ancient villages is an important way to enhance the vitality of the ancient village and increase economic income of local residents. This paper takes Fengjian ancient village in Xingtan Town, Shunde District, Foshan City as an example. Through field investigation, it is found that Fengjian ancient village is conditioned for building ecological museum. It is available to further optimize the scenic area, improve tourism facilities and improve the tourist service capabilities from aspects of ecological subject, ecological culture and ecological space so as to both protect the ancient village and create revenue by tourism.

Keywords: ecological museum, ancient village, tourism upgrade, ecological culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Foshan has a long history and is the birthplace of Lingnan culture. There are more than 4,000 natural villages. 22 of them are listed in the Chinese traditional village directory. Foshan is located in the economic zone of the Pearl River Delta, with highly developed economy. The ancient villages are seriously affected by urbanization in particular. Since 2014, the Foshan Municipal Government has cooperated with multiple departments and initiated the revitalization and upgrading of Foshan's characteristic ancient villages. As of April 2019, the revitalization and upgrading of 60 ancient villages has been completed, which has effectively protected the ancient villages' culture, while building the ancient villages into green ecological villages suitable for living and tourism. In the process of field investigation, it was found that there is common a problem of insufficient vitality in the ancient villages' tourism in Foshan. This paper uses the theory of ecological museum as a guide and explores the upgrading of the ancient villages in Foshan in order to solve the problem of lacking vitality.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over a review on scholars' researches on the protection and development of traditional villages, it is summarized that the researches include the protection system, tourism economy, local culture interpretation and protection, the village's social ecology, generality of individual villages, and the specific protection measures and methods. The researches mainly stay in the surface, lacking general guiding significance. Since the idea of constructing an ecological museum was put forward, some experts and scholars have begun to apply the idea to the protection and development of ancient villages. Chen Yan (2009) took the establishment of the Hani Terraced Field Cultural and Ecological Museum in Yuanyang, Yunnan as the research object, and explored the possibility of realizing harmonious unification of tourism development and cultural protection through the ecological museum. Zhang Ruimei (2011) specifically analyzed the effect of integrating the development of ecological museum and ethnic tourism, and believed that the integration and joint development of the two would pose a variety of positive effects, including enriching and enhancing ethnic tourism resources, promoting ethnic culture's protection, inheritance, and so on. Wen Hailei and Cao Wei (2013) took Guizhou and Guangxi Eco-Museum groups as examples and discussed the protection and inheritance of ecological museum and ethnic culture. According to the research, it is thought that ecological museum is an important model for protecting and promoting ethnic traditional culture and can better play its role by making adjustment based on local conditions and boldly making innovation in the construction process. The research of Wang Naiju and Shen Dongsheng (2014) believed that the development of ancient village tourism based on the idea of ecological museum must correctly handle the relationship between ecological space, ecological subject and ecological culture. Tang Xiaoxiang and Wang Dong (2017) summarized four paths for constructing ecological museum for protecting traditional villages in China nowadays and put forward countermeasures and suggestions for improving and perfecting the museum from perspectives of villagers, process management, resource integration, and village...
III. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF FENGJIAN ANCIENT VILLAGE IN XINGTAN TOWN, SHUNDE DISTRICT, FOSHAN

A. The history of Fengjian ancient village

Fengjian ancient village is located in the northwest of Xingtang Town, Shunde District, Foshan City, Guangdong Province, beside Jinli River in the lower reaches of Xijiang River. It is a typical Lingnan water village, known as "Shunde Zhouzhuhuang". Fengjian ancient village is one of the earliest inhabited places in Shunde. According to archaeological history, it is found that there had been human beings living in Fengjian more than 3000 years ago. In the history, Fengjian was economically prosperous. As early as in the Western Han Dynasty, the Fengjian people had reached a very high degree of agricultural civilization. After the Southern Song Dynasty, it was even more a refuge for the Central Plains immigrants. After the middle of Qing Dynasty, Fengjian became gradually prosperous due to its well-developed water traffic and flourishing silk industry, and thus was known as "Small Guangzhou". There are still many signs of the economic prosperity on the market of previous Fengjian, such as the "Gao Di She Dang Pu lane" near Jinjiao Bridge and the "Gufu Street" near Jvji Bridge.

B. Development status of tourism in Fengjian ancient village

Fengjian is geographically remote, and the ancient village status is well protected. As early as 2005, the "11th Five-Year Plan" of Foshan City included Fengjian in the city's key tourism resource projects and began tourism development. Until 2015, it was approved as a national 3A tourist attraction. In addition, Fengjian village has repeatedly been awarded the title of "the most beautiful village". For example, in 2013, Fengjian village won the "Model Award", the highest award for "Discovering the Most Beautiful Villages and Towns in China in 2013." In 2015, it won the "China's Most Beautiful Towns" Model Award again. In 2019, it was selected into the National Village Tourism Key Village List. After years of development, the tourism development of Fengjian village has been shaped into certain scale, with tourists reaching one million tourists per year. It has already been an important tourist attraction in Shunde District and is recommended on major travel APPs.

1) Rich natural resources showing the beauty of the original ecology

Fengjian village is surrounded by water on all sides, and the waterway in the area reaches more than 28 kilometers. The river surge is in "＋" shape, flows through the ancient village from the south to the north and cuts the village into several small sand islands. It is a typical landscape with bridges, river, households, showing a poetic illusion. The village is far from the downtown, the air is fresh and the atmosphere is quiet. The village is surrounded by farming fish ponds which are about 4,000 acres. It maintains the good rural scenery and natural features, showing the beauty of original ecology.

2) Clean and tidy village appearance and complete facilities in the scenic area

In Fengjian village, there are mostly neatly arranged small western-style buildings; roads in the village are smooth and mostly in cement pavements, clean and tidy; there are garbage bins, public toilets and entertainment places for villagers on the roads on both sides of the river; in the village, there are clear panoramagram for guidance, clear signposts at the fork road, as well as cruise ship docks, parks, health stations, parking lots, postal service points and tourist service centers. Villagers are warm and friendly, and like to chat under the banyan tree by the river bank. From these perspectives, Fengjian village has already been a relatively mature tourist area.

3) Many historical buildings showing ancient style of the ancient village

The ancient village has a history of more than 800 years and its remote geographical environment has helped preserving many historical buildings in the village. According to statistics, there are more than 30 stone bridges, 19 ancestral halls, many ancient temples, and more than 80 ancient folk houses, plenty of ancient trees and crossed stone roads in Fengjian village. Among them, the most precious stone bridges are the Mingyuan Bridge and Jvji Bridge built in the Song Dynasty and the Jinjiao Bridge built in the Qing Dynasty. Mingyuan Bridge was firstly built in the Song Dynasty and rebuilt for many times. It now maintains the style of Ming Dynasty. The bridge railings made of travertine slabs are engraved with various patterns. Stone lions are carved on the baluster heads on both sides, have been damaged somewhat and is listed as key cultural relics of Guangdong Province. There are 19 existing ancestral halls, with various styles, dignified and elegant, or simple and elegant, or gorgeous and exquisite: among them, the most famous ancestral halls are the Liu's Grand Ancestral Hall and Song Shenzheng Li's Ancestral Hall. Liu's Grand Ancestral Hall is the village's "first ancestral hall" which is a rare "five-room space and three entrances" structure in Lingnan. The ancestral hall sits north toward the south, adopts hard peak, the ridge of dragon boat, and blue-brick wall. It is a clan
building with a unique shape and a long history in Shunde period. There is also a historical building in the village Yonghe Academy that can better reflect the ancient village's strong poetry heirloom culture. It is a typical building of the Republic of China and still maintains the granite door frame and Tanglongmen (an ancient security door). In addition, there is a three-tier memorial archway "Jinshi archway" at the village entrance. The archway is in the style of the Song Dynasty and is one of the four major wooden archways in Guangdong.

4) The traditional cuisine here is well-known both in China and foreign countries, and the hand-made skills are still in succession.

There is a special Shunde food street in Fengjian village, where Daliang stir-fried milk, double-skin milk, ginger juice with milk, chicken in a round flat cakes, tofu pudding, sesame paste, Daliang jumping sand, cake Lunjiao, Chencun rice noodles, Jun'an steamed pig, fried fish cakes, handmade ginger powder, ginger sugar, citrus sugar and other snacks are sold. In the village, you can find a variety of handmade local snacks, such as handmade double-skin milk, handmade ginger powder, handmade salt-soaked Chinese wampee, and handmade sesame paste. In addition, local residents also set up stalls to sell various locally grown fruits and vegetables; in autumn and winter, there is also local finfish (called Laling fish) hanged and sold along the river.

5) Folk festivals are widely spread and loved by local people.

Fengjian ancient village is a typical village by river, with a unique water village culture. The famous folk activities include dragon boat racing, dragon boat rap, water weddings, gong cabinets, fish lanterns, lion and dragon dance, and Guanyin's birthday. Among them, dragon boat racing and dragon boat rap are both national-level intangible cultural heritage projects. Dragon boat rap, also known as "Dragon Boat Song" or "Shunde Dragon Boat", is named after the artist holding a wooden carved dragon boat as a symbol while singing. It was originated in Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. It is mainly singing, associated with spoken part. The rap content mainly includes local life trivia, and also covers the widely spread folk tales and legends or the words of blessings written and sung personally. When singing the rap, it is mixed with a lot of local slang and idioms, which makes it containing rich folklore information, and is a vivid way to spread the local culture. The dragon boat racing in Shunde has been famous since ancient times, and is generally divided into two types: "Dragon Tournament" and "Dragon Race". The dragon boat for Dragon Tournament is relatively large in size and beautifully decorated, with emphasis on cruising, hanging flags and playing drums and displaying costumes. The dragon boat for Dragon Race is relatively small in size, focusing on racing and competing, ranging from three-oar to fifteen-oar types. Every year at Dragon Boat Festival, there are very large dragon boat racing activities, mainly including "lifting dragon", "worshipping", "launching", "cruising", "racing", "washing with dragon boat water", "eat dragon boat rice", "Dragon hiding" and other parts. The event is grand and is participated by the young and old in the whole village. It is a very popular folk sport in the local area and an important means to promote villagers' emotional exchanges. Fengjian ancient village has successfully held several water village cultural festivals in succession. These classic programs will be performed on the cultural festival, attracting many tourists nearby to participate in it, and are well praised by people.

C. Problems existing in the tourism development of Fengjian ancient village

After many years of business development, the tourism development of Fengjian ancient village is becoming more and more mature, but the comments on various tourism APPs are not very satisfactory. There are 262 comments on the Honeycomb tourism APP, including 174 positive comments, 56 moderate comments, and 32 negative comments. The score given on Qunar.com is 4.3 and that on ctrip.com is 4.0. In our survey, only 33% people recommended friends and family to travel. The day of the investigation is not in festival; on the day, there are few tourists and the tour time is 2h. In short, compared with Jiangnan water villages such as Zhouzhuang, Tongli, and Xitang, there is still a large gap.

1) Lack of highlights in the scenic area

From the perspective of propaganda, Fengjian ancient village focuses on "water village" rather than "ancient village", although it is known as "Small Zhouzhuang in Shunde". However, the economy of the village has been well developed since ancient times. In addition, it is located in the Pearl River Delta region and is deeply affected by the development of modern urbanization. The residents' production and lifestyle are quite advanced, and the village has a strong modern atmosphere. It is very different from ancient villages with ancient flavors, so it is very accurate to be positioned as "water village". From tourists' comments on Honeycomb tourism APP and Qunar.com, it is also known that most of the reasons for tourists' negative comments are that they thought that Fengjian village lacks highlights and can hardly be compared with Zhouzhuang and the like water villages in Jiangnan region. Official propaganda shows that most of the propagations are around the "ancient bridge", "ancient ancestral hall" and "water village"; but in fact, there are not many historical buildings left in the village, and most buildings are modern small western-style buildings. It is too different from what tourists imagine about the ancient village, hence the negative comments and reduced attraction. Moreover, there are not so many propagation articles on the title of "water village". Except for boat trips to the village, watching the ancient bridges, and old wharf, there is no extra project for visiting. Except in large folk festivals, there is no extra attraction for a-day visiting. It’s hard to maintain tourists. In the village, although tourist area and villagers' residential area are integrated, most of the villagers may close their doors, without unnecessary interaction with tourists. Although it is very original, the cars come and go and people come and go so that the leisure tourism goal cannot be reached. There are not many places suitable for taking photos. The ancient ancestral hall is sacred. The food
here is not outstanding compared with that in Shunde downtown area. It is very boring for post-00 tourists in the new era. In short, Fengjian ancient village lacks highlights in tourism creation and is difficult to retain tourists.

2) Historic buildings in the scenic area need further protection

From the appearance, Fengjian ancient village actually has become a modern new village. Most of the folk houses are modern small western-style buildings, and there are few traditional dwellings. Ancient buildings in the village are mostly ancient ancestral halls and temples, and these buildings have been refurbished and lack the sense of history. The sight on a guide map is an ancient ancestral hall, which has not been renovated, but it is visible that it has already been abandoned, where the outer wall is overgrown with moss, the inner wall is peeled, overgrown with grass, and the windowsill is damaged in many places. Obviously, it is not well protected. The number of private folk houses is also decreasing year by year. Villagers demolish and rebuild them, lacking the sense of retention. The ancient bridge is full of history and is still in use, but the railings are somewhat broken, especially the stone lions; but they have not been well repaired and maintained. The scenery on both sides of the bridge has not been deliberately preserved so that the pictures taken lack the flavor of ancient style.

3) Supporting facilities in the scenic area still need to be further improved

Fengjian water village is currently an open scenic area, and is mainly governed by villagers themselves. As it is an open scenic area, there is not a uniform entrance, the original ecology of the scenic area is preserved to the greatest extent; but it also makes it inconvenient for the management so that tourists' experience is weakened. First, the scenic area needs further planning, and motor vehicles should be strictly prohibited. Roads in the village are relatively narrow. Villagers ride in and out of the village by motorcycles and tourists come and go, which is easy to lead to traffic accidents. Administrator of the village should make plan for the main tourist route facilitate tourists' visit. Secondly, there are too few toilets in the scenic area. During our tour, it is found that only two lanes are provided with public toilets. A post written "1 Yuan/person using the toilet" is posted on the front door of a small store. This phenomenon is also criticized by netizens. Third, signs in the scenic spot are not clear. During the survey, we went to visit the scenic spots one by one according to the scenic guide map. Some scenic spots are still difficult to find, mainly because there is no clear sign in front of the scenic spot. Fourthly, the text descriptions on signs of the scenic spots are mostly in Chinese; few signs adopt text descriptions in both Chinese and English. As a famous scenic spot in Guangfo area, Fengjian water village will have a lot of inconvenience if foreign guests come to visit.

4) The tourist experience of the scenic area is not strong

From the experience of this field survey, Fengjian water village is still dominated by sightseeing and tourism, and the participatory tourism experience has not been further explored. Tourists can experience five different feelings of sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste during the travel process. The fusion of the "five senses" helps to enhance tourists' emotional experience, thus bringing tourists a pleasant experience. However at present, the development of tourism resources in Fengjian water village is at a relatively low level and it is difficult to give tourists a pleasant feeling from the "five senses". Current young people prefer to take pictures, but it is difficult to find a suitable place to take pictures in Fengjian.

IV. SUGGESTION FOR UPGRADE THE TOURISM IN FENGJIAN ANCIENT VILLAGE BASED ON ECO-MUSEUM THEORY

Ecological museum has swept the world for more than 40 years, and there are currently more than 300 ecological museums around the world. Ecological museum emphasizes the integration of nature and culture, and highlights the leading role of local residents. It can effectively resolve the contradiction between cultural protection and the development of tourism resources. While protecting local characteristic culture, it also enriches local tourism resources. Construction of such museum is a way of economic development suitable for Chinese traditional villages. Fengjian water village is far from the urban area, and has superior natural environment, long history, and obvious local cultural characteristics. Although tourism development has been carried out for many years, it is still in the initial stage. The commercial atmosphere is not very strong. The scenic area has heavy flavor of original ecology. Some local residents still live on agriculture. Above all, this water village is very suitable for being built into an ecological museum. The following mainly talks about the tourism upgrade of Fengjian ancient village from aspects of the ecological subject, ecological culture and ecological space.

A. Determining the ecological subject and increasing the enthusiasm of villagers to participate in the construction of ecological museum

In the eco-museum theory, villagers are the main body of ecology and the key to the construction of ecological museum. Local residents are the main carriers and inheritors of traditional production methods, lifestyles or the traditional culture. Cultural tourism activities without participation of local residents are performances losing soul. For the currently mature attractions such Lijiang ancient city, Phoenix ancient city, Zhouzhuang and other scenic areas, the point criticized by people the most is that there is few local residents and most residents here are external businessmen. At present in Fengjian water village, local residents reach more than 95%, but less than one third of the residents actually participate in the tourism of the village. The main economic income of villagers comes from going out to start a business or work. Although Fengjian water village has received one million tourists each year, the development of the scenic area is still in the initial stage because of its free admission. Tourists' visit often takes 2-3 hours. Basically, they do not dine and stay in local place so that they cannot
bring local residents with more income and thus it is difficult to retain the village residents. Meanwhile, to enhance the level of tourism and develop experiential tourism projects, it is necessary to have a large number of residents participated in it. Therefore, in order to build an eco-museum type tourist attraction, it is necessary to well deal with the benefit distribution between the government, the developer, and the local residents, protect the economic interests and power of villagers, improve their positions and further enhance local residents’ positivity in participating in the tourism development and protection of the ancient village.

B. Integrating ecological and cultural resources and creating the highlights of the scenic area

Ecological culture is the soul of ecological museum and the key to improving the spiritual experience of tourists. Fengjian ancient village has a long history and rich natural resources, historical and cultural resources, and folk cultural resources, but it has not been deeply explored. The presentation method is relatively simple, and it is difficult to meet the diverse needs of tourists. To this end, to meet the requirements for the construction of ecological museum, it is necessary to reorganize the local ecological culture, remove its impurities, grasp the core, innovate in form and polish and promote it. In this polishing process, it is needed to actively go deep into the local residents to collect materials and enhance local residents' cultural identity and self-acceptance while awakening their cultural cognition. Secondly, the local sense can be enhanced by creating a local cultural atmosphere and highlighting the regional cultural characteristics. It can be realized through the following three aspects: the first is to highlight the local cultural atmosphere. For example, in the scenic area, it is available to provide uniform iconic fittings that can show the local cultural characteristics to decorate it, such as adding dining experience area, amusement area with local characteristics, or adding farmland-style paradise with water village atmosphere. The second is to highlight the buildings with local characteristics; from toilets, restaurants, parking lots to shops, folk houses, homestays, etc., all of which can be demonstrated in form of local landmark buildings. The third is to make the culture "alive", namely to show people the local natural landscape, residential buildings, production and lifestyle in an "alive" art. For example, there are fixed mills showing handmade gourmet food such as handmade sesame paste, double-skin milk, salt-soaked Chinese wampee, etc., as well folk custom performances performed at fixed time every day such as water village weddings, water village silk delivery, and water village dragon boats. Generally, through the above measures, it is possible to slowly create the highlights of the scenic area, enhance the experience of tourists, and achieve the purpose of extending the length of stay of tourists and obtaining tourism revenue.

C. Continuing the ecological space and improving the management and service capacity of the scenic area

Ecological space includes natural ecological environment space and ecological human environment space. Beautiful natural ecological space is the external prerequisite for the construction of ecological museum. Fengjian ancient village covers an area of 5.26 square kilometers, governs 28 kilometers of watercourse, and has more than 4,000 acres of fish ponds. It is an open scenic area that involves all areas of the village. After years of treatment, the natural ecological space already has a beautiful environment, rich greenery, excellent water quality, and fresh air, which provides the villagers with a continuous supply of materials and energy resources for production and life. In the future, it is still needed to enhance river governance, prohibit random felling, littering and random construction, and ensure maintaining the existing layout of the village to provide a space for carrying folk culture based ecological tourism, agriculture based ecological tourism and water village based ecological tourism.

Ecological humanistic environment refers to the material culture carrier left over from the historical development of the ancient village, including the spatial layout of the village and various buildings here. Through investigation, it is found that Fengjian ancient village is surrounded by water on all sides, with rivers as the boundary, and presents a "#" shape. There are 16 groups in total, forming a relatively independent and closely connected settlement community. Currently, the village is the integration of tourist area and villagers' residential area (living and working area). This situation, on the one hand, provides convenient conditions for the construction of an ecological museum; and on the other, it is difficult to distinguish tourist area and residential area so that local people's work and rest and the safety of tourists in the scenic area may be affected. Based on the consideration of building an ecological museum, the author suggests that it is no longer necessary to divide the tourist area and residential area in the village, but the following points need to be achieved: the first is to make rational planning for the space based on the original layout of the village, and balance the production and living of local residents and the space needs of tourists while protecting the original historic humanistic buildings; the second is to reasonably control the intervention of modern buildings in the village, pay attention to maintaining the village's quaint visual profile and skyline, repair and protect historic buildings in the village, and demolish and rebuild irrational building; the third is to reasonably plan a space in the scenic area that can satisfy tourists' basic needs such as "accommodation, travel, buying, playing, enjoying, rest and learning" needs so as to improve the service capabilities of the scenic area. These spaces can blend with each other, and the appearance of buildings needs to be consistent with the village style and highlight the local cultural characteristics.

V. Conclusion

Fengjian water village is a typical Lingnan water village and a microcosm of traditional Lingnan people's life. Although Fengjian water village has already been a relatively mature tourist area, there are still many problems in the area's highlights, environment, and management services to be further improved and upgraded. After field investigation, it is believed that Fengjian ancient village is conditioned for
the basic construction of ecological museum; it is possible to further optimize the scenic area, improve tourism facilities and enhance the tourist service capabilities from three aspects: ecological subject, ecological culture and ecological space. This way can help reaching the purpose of both protecting the ancient village and developing the tourism here. Taking full consideration from the perspective of the protection of historical and cultural heritage, further excavating the local folk culture and creating a strong atmosphere with local cultural characteristics will help to inherit and promote the history and culture of Fengjian water village, actively promote the construction of "beautiful" village, and further revitalize rural area.

REFERENCES

[1] Chen Yan. Ecological Museum: Harmonious Unity of Tourism Development and Cultural Protection — Conception of Establishing Hani Terraced Field Ecological Museum in Yuanyang, Yunnan [J]. Journal of Honghe University, 2009 (07): 6-10. (in Chinese)

[2] Zhang Ruimei. The Construction of Ecology Museum and the Holistic Effect of Ethnic Tourism [J]. Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities(Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2011 (33): 104-108. (in Chinese)

[3] Wen Hailei, Cao Wei. The Protection and Inheritance of Ecological Museums and Ethnic Cultures — Taking Guizhou and Guangxi Ecological Museums as Examples [J]. Minzu Tribune, 2013 (03): 47-50. (in Chinese)

[4] Wang Naiju, Shen Dongsheng. Tourism Development Model of Ancient Villages Based on the Thoughts of Ecological Museum [J]. Journal of Anhui Agricultural University (Social Science Edition), 2014 (23): 29-35. (in Chinese)

[5] Tang Xiaoxiang, Wang Dong. The Research on the Traditional Villages Preservation from the Perspective of Eco-museum-Orientation [J]. Journal of Kunming University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences), 2017 (17): 102-108. (in Chinese)

[6] Yin Lu. On the Protection of Traditional Villages in Jilin Province from the Perspective of Eco-museum Theory [J]. Design Research, 2018 (08): 91-96. (in Chinese)