Reflections on the Environment Update of Huaiyin Village, Zhenjiang, China under the Legendary Background

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ABSTRACT

The most urgent problem that rural area people want to settle in the new rural area construction is the equalization of urban and rural public facilities and the improvement of their living conditions. This paper is an exploratory research taking the environment update of Huaiyin Village, Zhenjiang as a specific case. Huaiyin Village, which is located at Guyang Town, Zhenjiang city. Here the paper analyzes resources of Huaiyin from the development and protection perspective and put forward the protective village updates strategies based on the problems emerging in the environment update of Huaiyin with the significance of protecting villages with legend culture. The ultimate target is to construct an all-around new rural village which can realize the perfect coordinated development of rural economy, society and ecology.

Keywords: Legend culture; China; Zhenjiang; Huaiyin Village; village environment; update
1. INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND HUMANISM BACKGROUND OF ZHENJIANG

1.1 Geographical Background of Zhenjiang

Zhenjiang is located in the south bank of the middle and lower reaches of Yangtze River, southwest of Jiangsu Province, which covers the area from 118°58’E~119°58’E, and from 31°37’N~31°19’N. The climate of Zhenjiang is subtropical monsoon climate, which is affected by cold and dry northerly winds in the winter while affected by the warm and humid southerly winds in summer with four distinctive seasons. Its annual average temperature is about 16.1 °C with the highest temperature being 41.4 °C and the lowest temperature being minus 7.8 °C. Its frost-free period is 239 days and its average annual rainfall is 1058.1 mm.

Zhenjiang has the best location conditions of Yangtze River Delta and is an important transportation hub in eastern China with the Beijing-Shanghai Railway, Shanghai-Nanjing Expressway, Yang-Li Expressway, 312 State Road, 104 State Road and other traffic arteries running through the whole area. There are airports in its neighboring cities, Nanjing and Changzhou, to help achieve the convenient transportation over the county and the world. Zhenjiang is the intersection place of Yangtze River and the Grand Canal, and it has the third largest one hundred million-ton Harbor in Yangtze River Basin - Zhenjiang Port.

1.2 Humanism Background of Zhenjiang

Zhenjiang has rich tourism resources and has been listed as one of the key cities of tourism development by the National Tourism Administration, and is known as the “Mountain City”. The famous scenic spots of Zhenjiang include Jin Mount, Jiao Mount, South Mount, Xijin Ferry, Mao Mount, Baohua Mount, Beigu Mount, riverside scenic spots and so on. Zhenjiang has a long history, majestic mountains, numerous historical sites and grand natural scenery, which is glamorous, and it ever was named as the “First Landscape” by the ancients.

2. LOCATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HUAIYIN VILLAGE

Huaiyin Village is an edge part of the Yangtze River, and is constituted by the sediment deposition brought by the Yangtze River, which is an alluvial plain with its most area being 30 meters below the altitude. The Village is located beside the road of Yurong Town, with the south ancient town, Shangdang on its south and mile-long hills on its north. The total area of the Village is 3.84 square kilometers and the construction used area is about 0.18 square kilometers. As is shown in the north-south shape of the Village is an
irregular triangle, the terrain of which is the south higher than the north and the west higher than the east. And roads in the Village are winding with houses being developed along roads in the shape of chunks or slugs and the building layout is relatively flexible and free. There is a bazaar street in the village, and the village center is formed based on this street. Several alleys extend out from the bazaar street, forming the village center, and houses are arranged along those alleys. There is a river running through the village with widespread ponds and farmlands scattering along both sides of the river. There is a small temple at the entrance of the Village, which is the place for villagers to held religious activities and to take a rest. The Village now has the village committee and village clinics, kindergartens and other public buildings.

The Village has 17 villager groups with 490 households, the total population of which is about 2100. Most farmers are mainly living on planting and breeding. Residents in the Villages are mainly elderly and preschool children and the population structure is seriously aging with long resident periods. The time for outdoor activities of most residents is about 1-2 hours and their main trip mode is walking. “There is no village without legends. If a legend is shared by the whole village, then it becomes the Village Memory”.1 Double Seventh Festival is the Chinese Valentine’s Day. Stories of the terrestrial magic couple, Dong Yong and the Seventh Fairy in the folklore are equally popular and these stories were widespread in areas of Zhenjiang like Yanling of Danyang and Shangdang more than 700 years ago.2 The story of Goddess Marriage is one of the Four Folk Tales of China. Huaiyin Village is the legendary place where Dong Yong sold himself and got married with the Seventh Fairy. It was said that Dong Yong, the local people of Yanling, Danyang, was very filial and he sold himself to a rich family of Shangdang for burying his dead father.

Dong’s piety touched the Seventh Fairy in the Heaven so she incarnated as a lady and came to earth. When Dong Yong arrived at the entrance to Huaiyin Village, the Seventh Fairy executed her magic power to let the old Chinese scholar tree be their matchmaker. Since the old tree spoke words unexpectedly so Dong Yong believed it was the will of Heaven. Therefore, he happily got married with the Seventh Fairy under this tree. “If these memories are destroyed or disappear from people’s daily lives, the necessary link between man and place will lose, consequently people’s basic quality will decline”.3 In recent years, the relevant government agencies have further explored this precious folk cultural heritage. They have taken protective measures for protections of eight relics related to the occurrence of the story, and sketched drawings of historic ruins and distributions and made signs. Early in 2007, they developed a five-year protection plan for the story relics, and have proposed the establishment of exhibition hall and theme park for the story of “The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong ”to make this culture be handed down from generation to generation. So far there is the Seventh Fairy Bridge, Seventh
Fairy Pond, Heaven--reaching Platform, the Old Chinese Scholar Tree and other landscape sites in Huaiyin Village. And the legend culture relevant scenic spots such as the “Seventh Fairy Pond”, “Lotus Pond”, “Seventh Fairy Bridge”, “Local God Temple” have been completed (FIGURE 1).

There is a Huaiyin Temple in the Village with couplets on its pillar, saying: “Dong Yong is actually a farmer, the fairy is unexpectedly a spinner”, which expresses villagers’ expectations for the life of men tilling the farm and women weaving. Recently, residents of Huaiyin Village made detailed investigation of the relic distribution position of “The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong”, and attempted to restore the original appearance of the Huaiyin Old Bridge. They also constructed the “Seventh Fairy Square” of approximately 3,000 square meters and a large statue of the Seventh Fairy. Today, the legendary “The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong” has become the first batch of intangible cultural heritage of Jiangsu Province. Meanwhile, they have collected ancient books, books, dramas, videos, pictures, librettos and information of ancient and modern versions related to the legendary of "The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong" for publishing.

FIGURE 1. Distribution of “Seven Landscapes of Huaiyin Village”.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1 Resource Analysis of Huaiyin Village

3.1.1 Advantages

Zhenjiang is located to the eastern coast of China, south of Jiangsu province, center of north wing of Yangtze River delta. As the kernel metropolitan layer of Nanjing and Shanghai, its favorable location makes for Huaiyin Village’s acceptance of market radiation from Zhenjiang’s surrounding cities, and also promotes to the cooperative development of surrounding region. Huaiyin Village is located in the southwest of Guyang town, merely 12 kilometers from the southern suburb of Zhenjiang’s downtown. As the reserve village in the layout planning of Guyang town, Huaiyin Village has a rich cultural deposit with various legends and relics, which become its resource superiority endowed by nature. Most of the resources are high-grade and have natural
endowment, which contribute to development of village culture and ecological agriculture by means of proximity effect. Huaiyin Village holds Double Seventh Festival activity every year as an important measure to inherit and spread the legend of The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong. At traditional Double Seventh Festival, Dantu district in Zhenjing has held many activities about the folk customs of “Love in Huaiyin, Share at Double Seven”. By means of four activities: “cut the ribbon at the door of statesman”, Dantu field song, “fairy couple” performance and group marriage, it demonstrates the folk and customs of Huaiyin Village and the love legend of The Seventh Fairy and Dong Yong.

3.1.2 Disadvantages

The layout of village is spread out and industrial land lacks integrated planning; Houses are old and architectural style is different with each other; infrastructure’s supporting ability is poor and living environment is a mass. It lacks afforestation, the medium afforest layers are not well-arranged and landscaping design is obsolete and enclosed, which discourages the activities and communications among residents; the pond and the water channel are polluted by household garbage; the narrow roads lack due maintenance and renovation; defective road system results in the chaos of motor way and walkways, so that motor ways pass through living area and main roads are occupied by parking cars. Drainage system is defective.

Educational, recreational, recycling, fitness and medical facilities cannot run as a complete set, which affect residential living standard to some extent. Rainwater cannot be effectively used and discharged, fire-fighting equipment is imperfect, street lamps are scarce and leisure, fitness facilities and activity venues for the elderly are deficient. Although recent reconstruction project perfects the landscape of Huaiyin Village, some public utilities are in a single and repetitive form without unique features, which result in weak recognition and lack of its own cultural characteristics and individuality. In its preliminary development, the types of resources are single, which is presented by architecture and legendary spots with few refined scenic spots, strong substitutability of partial resources and inconspicuous resource advantages.

3.2 Methodology

The sense of place consists of environment, activity, value and local spirit or local features. Environment update should carry out special and conditional update on the basis of inheritance and protection. It should timely adjust the factors that are inconvenient for farmers and are disadvantageous to farmers’ production and life in the “people-oriented” design spirit and try to involve
villagers in the design under the permissible circumstances. By questionnaires, discussion with residents, detailed filed visit and reconnaissance, statistical analysis of the status quo of Huaiyin Village shows that:

Fully integrating the sense of place factor evaluation results of Huaiyin villagers in the environment updates, as shown in FIGURE 2, first, analyze the village structure and texture, adjust the residential layout under the perspective of respecting the original pattern and structure. At the same time, save and intensively use the land, establish the rural residential construction that suits its resources and technology. Intensively assort village infrastructure services and municipal infrastructure construction, focusing on roads, afforestation, water supply, drainage, public toilets, street lighting, parking lots and other construction work, to enhance and improve the living environment quality and living standards of residents. Conduct the original landscape continuation of streets, water, farmland, woodland, orchards and other etc., and organically combine neighborhoods, streets, fields, rivers and other ecological landscape elements to form a the environmental system of “point, line, surface” while strengthen renovations of water pond and rivers (FIGURE 3). The vacated land through consolidation can be used as farmland, garden, and for urban or industrial development land. The intensive residential way provides residents with conditions for conveniently enjoy the full range of public facilities, which include the village committee, community centers, clinics, post offices, retail facilities, restaurants, elderly activity center, agricultural markets and etc.

Secondly, effectively explore and play geographical features and historical context of Huaiyin Village, and focus on the advantages of “Dong Yong and the Seventh Fairy” as well as strengthen their spirit of place, making it resonate with the user, to create a unique landscape combined with the spatial scale. Successfully develop the economic value of historical and cultural heritage and strengthen the creation of regional culture to make the environment has a significant recognition and spiritual function which can create a sense of environment identity and belonging. Johnston believes that the sense of place is individual’s or groups’ profound sense of attachment of places relying on their experiences, memories and attachment of individuals and groups. In the process of landscape update, we can emphasize the uniqueness of the small
environment from the perspective of space level, plant configuration, landscape sketches and other aspects to improve the recognition of the environment. “Culture and national culture should be central to the community as well as the leading development content of the city, the region, the nation and the international world”. Finally, make the use of modern technologies and materials in the economy permission scope and taking the use function satisfaction as the premise. During the production and life, we should fully rely on solar energy and other new energy sources, and converts rural waste as biogas, bio-oil, gas, electricity and other resources to meet the rural production and living needs for energy, thus maintain and improve the sustainable development of rural area environmental quality.

4. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

**FIGURE 4.** Renovation ideas. **FIGURE 5.** Landscape integration of “Seven Landscapes of Huaiyin Village”.

4.1 Landscape Update

The update must integrate and optimize resources, combing the small and multi-node landscapes of Huaiyin Village to refine landscape nodes, showing the cultural connotation of the fairy tale “Dong Yong and the Seventh Fairy”. The prominent landscape in the innovation of Huaiyin Village is the Seventh Fairy Square, and the rest are small scattered nodes. The villagers always like to walk, take a rest or do morning exercise in the Huaiyin Village Park. In the update process, we should protect the high-frequency used nodes by inhabitants as far as possible. For those places which are high-frequently used for activities, such as the Local God Temple, the Heaven-reaching Platform and other scenic spots of “Seven Landscapes of Huaiyin Village” (Figure 5) to arrange recreational facilities and greenbelt and add as well as rationally distribute seats to provide villagers with effective places for cultural activities. The plant allocation should be mainly dominated by native trees to protect original vegetation of the village. Involve fruit trees and cash crops into the eco-green system of the environment update and the courtyard afforesting should be dominated with economic plants, such as ginkgo, jujube and so on.
4.2 Street Update

First, clear up the current homogenized and casual streets of Huaiyin Village and then intensify them through the function and the environment. Secondly, current streets of Huaiyin Village can be classified into three grades based on their width: about 5.0m, 3.0 ~ 3.5m and 2.5 ~ 3.0m. Under the condition that there is on change in the spatial scale and style of the street, optimize the landscape and the traffic environment of the street area, improve the basic facilities and municipal facilities (Figure 6), divide the motor vehicle lanes and walking paths, and update forms, materials and colors combined with cultural characteristics of legends.

FIGURE 6. Updated streets landscape diagram.

4.3 Building Update

The building update both needs to match its surrounding environment and to take the relevance of architecture and culture into account, and thus conduct protections and recycle of historical sites based on the thought of “Organic Update”. The building update protection should be dominated with the maintenance of styles of the original building to shape the identification of sites. Secondly, adopt innovative methods based on development requirements of “low carbon economy”, and design the extension part which is harmonious with the surrounding environment, to maintain the environment integrity. For single buildings, we should adopt classification protection way to conduct renovation, which can be divided into renovation, demolition and recycling. We should preserve those constructions and buildings of better quality, renovate those partly intact constructions and demolish as well as update those which have been ruined. We should conduct authenticity renovations for those building whose original body frame is still stable and can be reused. Comprehensively take the architectural history, materials, technology, and many other aspects into considerations and change the internal structure with maintaining the original external shape in the reconstruction process. Replace those original indoor wooden structure stairs and brick-concrete structure wall with reinforced concrete frame structure so that it can both meet the needs of fire protection and improve the durability of the building.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the perspective of village life, we should improve the living
environment for the villagers to get spiritual pleasure and enjoyment. The rural development should be rooted in inheriting and carrying forward the traditional culture and historical context and make full use of local resources to effectively protect and inherit local characters and cultural landscapes. While improving the material conditions of the village, we should retain the rural diversification and humane living environment. Develop the regional economy. The study of this paper is based on the long-term research on rural areas of Zhenjiang. Due to the existence of geographical diversities and differences, the research results of this paper do not represent the general characteristics of Chinese rural environment update.

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