Landscape Pattern in Traditional Village--Thinking over the Zhonglou Village, Conghua

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Abstract: A traditional village is a cultural landscape containing significant historical information. This paper takes Conghua Zhonglou Village of Guangdong Province as a case study, to analyze the village landscape pattern through the four aspects of regional environment, traditional layout, architecture characteristics, and historical environment. It is found that the investigation of the landscape pattern in a village is crucial, which helping to understand the hidden cultural value and contributing to the transmission of the cultural tradition.

1. Introduction

Traditional village is formed through a long-term cultural activity of human life. It is a substance accumulation and a cultural landscape, containing humanistic spirits and expressing a certain mode of life[¹]. The landscape elements of a village can be understood in terms of rivers, arch bridge, trees (in this case, the ficus microcarpa), ancestral temple, and so forth. The landscape elements with rich cultural connotation not only constitute a special symbol of village forms showing their own identity, but also reflect a series of spiritual requirements for blessing, worshiping, praying family for successful life, and showing family strength. The landscape elements of a village is therefore a cultural pattern that can be identified, surveyed, and inherited. This paper aim at analyzing the landscape elements of a traditional village through a schematic theory and a systematic method; it is hoped that it can provide a new angle for the future study of the traditional village, and draw a lesson for the village conversation.

2. Connectivity of a Traditional Village Landscape Pattern

The term pattern means the rules of an image[²]. It can be characterized by intuition, identifiability, simple, and effective spreading[³]. In this sense, “pattern” reflecting a stable mode of structure[⁴]. By using the “pattern” as a method for this study, it will help to find out and to refine the regularity and stability[⁵]. The traditional village, as mentioned, is a cultural landscape characterized by regionalism and its cultural continuity, therefore, they have their own connectivity[⁶]. This paper is to find out a key to reveal the culture and the structure of a traditional village, through a way of extracting the landscape concerning regularity and stability, so as to generalize a classical landscape space.
The paper divides the village landscape elements into four categories from macro- to micro-level, including regional environment, traditional layout, architecture characteristics, and historical environment. ①Regional environment contains natural environment and village environment. ②Traditional layout covers spatial layout, streets, riverway, node space, etc.. ③Architecture characteristics includes public architecture, residential architecture, defensive architecture, etc.. ④Historical environment is consisted of structures and featured landscape, etc. (Fig. 1). The following text will investigate the landscape pattern of a traditional Guangfu (Cantonese) village.

![Traditional village landscape system schema sheet](image1)

**Figure 1. Traditional village landscape system schema sheet**

**3. The Basic Pattern Intention of Landscape of Zhonglou Village**

Zhonglou village is located in Taiping Town, Conghua City. It is founded in the eighth year of Emperor Xianfeng in Qing Dynasty (1858). It can found in the Record of Zhonglou that the founder of the village was a descendant of Ouyang Xiu. The Ouyang Ren Shan Public Memorial Temple was built to commentary his father. In the main gate, there is a couplet written as: “Lu Ling Shi Ze, Bo Hai Jia Sheng,” meaning “with a great benefit from their ancestors, the Ouyang clan has a reputation.
abroad.” Later, the Ouyang family built attached houses flanked at the both sides (Fig. 2). The following text will analyze the basic landscape pattern in the four aspects of regional environment, traditional layout, architecture characteristics, and historical environment, and set examples for each pattern.

3.1. Regional environment
The living and procreating of villagers are closely associated with the natural environment, including the influential factors of mountain, water, and cultivated land; these factors are mutually interweaved to create a built environment, and jointly foster the development of the village. The Zhonglou Village is located in an ideal fengshui setting, with a sitting mountain named Jinzhong Mountain at the back (north), an open view with a Liuxi River in the front (south), enclosed by farmland and fruit-bearing forest. The village setting is expressing a geomancy theory of “Nei Cheng Sheng Qi, Wai Jie Tang Qi”, meaning “the energy or matter of the village is accumulated internally and extend to the outside village” \(^7\). The following text will investigate three key elements of mountain, water, and farmland.

3.1.1. Mountain. The sitting mountains comes from the northeast to the southwest appearing in a winding vision; the side protective mountains of the east and the west are covered with lush trees and grasses. Mountains can be seen indistinctly from the southeastern part of the village, while the mountains in the south is flat, gentle, and smooth, expressing a typical fengshui layout of “the azure dragon on the left, the white tiger on the right, the red bird in the front, the black tortoise at the back,” and gathering the “qi.”

3.1.2. Water. The Liuxi River generated from the southern part of the village. The ancient village appears in a setting of “closing to mountain and facing water.” Within the village, a major tributary pass by to create a fengshui layout, symboling the straight dragon protecting and blessing the village, and all the rivers go back to the origin. These are all expressing a good landscape pattern and a perfect living mode. The far streams joint by a winding manner, while the near rivers are around the village
appearing like a jade belt winding waist resulting a perfect layout of “concealing the wind and collecting the qi.”

3.1.3. Farmland. Farmland and forest are spreading all over the Zhonglou Village between Jinzhong Mountain and the Liuxi River. Seventy percent of the village are covered with fruit-bearing forest, forming an excellent ecological system. Resources for daily farm and production are rich. Generally, the Zhonglou Village fulfills a perfect fengshui theory, with an abundant forest, close to the mountains, and facing water. The whole village is completely sitting in a harmonious environment, elaborating a classical pattern for village landscape. The pattern and derivation process can be found in Fig. 3.

3.2. Traditional layout

3.2.1. Spatial layout. The Zhonglou Village reveals a typical spatial layout of Guangfu style featuring two characteristics, the first is “emphasizing a hierarchical layout of the clansman,” the second is “conforming to the natural environment.” The first characteristic can be understood through the village setting. The Zhonglou village is composed of seven rows of buildings, wherein the Ouyang Ren Mountain Public Temple at the center, surrounding by resident houses at both sides; streets and alleys are arranged among the buildings forming a typical broach pattern. The village setting is an embodiment of the clan consanguinity emphasizing a hierarchical social structure. For the second characteristic, the core area of the village contains seven lengthways streets and a transverse street, linking with yard spaces, showing a good accessibility. This spatial pattern showcases a good organization of village space, conforming to the Lingnan hot and humid climate. The village setting and pattern are shown in Fig. 4.

Figure 4. The Landscape Pattern of the Village Setting (River, Street, Alley)

3.2.2. Streets and riverways. The Zhouglou village conforms to the difference of the terrain, the southeast is low while the northwest is high. In the village, open drains are set in the middle of the streets, making use of the terrain difference, resulting a regular spatial vein. On account of the broach
layout, the seven lengthways streets within the village are parallel mutually, vertical to a transverse street, with the shortest street of 45.3m, the longest street of about 1100m. Taking advantage of the broach layout, villagers can mutually “watch” each other, taking care for each other. If encounter difficulty, the neighbor villagers or family can provide help in time. This is the benefit of the village layout, terming as “help each other.” Additionally, the village has a natural drainage system composed of ponds, rivers, and brooks. The old drainage vein can still be recognized through the current fishpond and riverways.

3.2.3. Node space. The node space of village always reflects the local customs and the living scene. The node space can be divided into three categories including traffic space, assembly space, and rest space. The traffic space within the Zhonglou Village can be further divided into “village gate space” and “street gate space.” In this case, the village gate (east gate) near the sunning ground is the main node space, connecting the inside and outside of the village. When enter the village, the villagers actually enter a social space of blood relationships, forming a “sense of belonging.” Besides, the village gate also services as a landmark marking the boundary. The street gate is another node space to connect the streets with the standing grain ground. Villagers can only enter their houses after entering street gate, while they can also enter the gathering space after getting out of street gate. Hence, the street gate is the most significant node space; it is a wisdom of the villagers’ painstaking efforts for “defense” in the old days [8]. The assembly space and rest space of Zhonglou Village are composed of temple, standing grain ground, and riverways, which are all characterized by their openness. There are all classical pattern of Guangfu style. The pattern and derivation process are shown in Fig.5 and Fig. 6.

3.3. Architecture characteristics
Buildings in the village is the most recognizable pattern. They have been built in a certain period and a certain environment, containing a certain building technique, showing a certain architectural shape and structure. The building of the Zhonglou Village mainly includes public building, residential building, and defensive building \[9\]. ① The Ouyang Ren Mountain Public Temple is located in the center of the village belong to an architectural layout of “five-courtyards flanked with two single yards,” covering more than 2500m². It is the largest surviving temple in the Conghua City. The temple is a brick-timber structure, with a hard peak roof; it contains 99 gates symbolling an ancient Chinese saying of “nine nine into one,” a beautiful aspiration for living in harmony. ② The residential houses surrounding the temple mainly contain two types of architectural forms of “single-row house” and “three-hall and two-corridor house”, wherein ninety percent of the buildings belong to latter type. Small house are in form of courtyard pattern showcase a classical Guangfu architectural form. ③ Furthermore, battlements used for watching and protection are still remained in the south, west, and north corner of the village, and four-storey watchtower is still sand in the north corner of the village. These strongly fortified city walls, moat, and gun turret prevent the whole village from bandit attack in the turbulent years. The pattern can be found Fig. 7.

3.4. Historical environment element
Historical environment element not only refers to the buildings associated with the village environment, but also the construction, structure, and landscape related to the production for daily living. The village scenes including a living mode such as, the elders who enjoy the cool under the pavilion, the children playing on the bridge, the women washing clothes in a plank road along the face of a cliff, these are greatly important to a traditional showing villagers’ living experience and wisdom. The structures in the Zhonglou Village includes village gates (arch gates) and village enclosure. Wherein there is only one village gate of the five surviving in the east of Zhonglou Village, it is ornamented by an arch gate and two kettle-ear gables. Featured landscapes inside the village include wells providing water source for the villagers, flagpole stone showing the record of the village scholar honors or official rank, all of which are featuring landscapes in a Guangfu village. The landscape pattern of the village is shown in Fig. 8.
4. Conclusion

The featuring landscape elements in a traditional village including ancestral temple, standing grain ground, protecting review, kettle-ear gable, cool alley, etc. These constitute a landscape pattern and form the physical culture of a village. All of these patterns together express an aesthetic ideology, showcase the intangible cultural value concerning religion, believe, ritual, and spirits. The landscape pattern and the village culture intertwine and both of them are irreplaceable. Hence, the investigation of the landscape pattern in a certain village is crucial, which helping to understand the hidden cultural value, contributing to the transmission of the cultural tradition.

This paper, taking a real-life case of the Zhonglou Village and analyzing its landscape pattern, it is found that the village has a very distinctive cultural value which is closely associated with the natural factors including climate, topography, and other humanity factors including social, political, economic, cultural influence. The Zhonglou village setting showcases a landscape feature of “having a sitting mountains at the back, facing an open view in the front, surrounding by a rivers appears as a jade belt manner, symbolizing a perfect fengshui mode.” Furthermore, the layout of the Zhonglou village shows the hierarchical spatial relationship of “clansman gathering” derived from a Chinese family consanguinity. The layout of the village is well organized like a broach; the layout of the street reveals a mode of “helping and taking care of each other.” All these patterns make up the cultural value of the traditional villages, reflecting the spatial and spiritual pursuit. The landscape patterns are also an elements for triggering local memory and getting a sense of a certain place; for instance, the memorial gate, the fengshui pond, and old trees, are all indispensable parts of the village memory. The historical value will lost once they are damaged. Hence, maintaining the authenticity and integrity of landscape pattern is essential for the conservation of a traditional village.

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Chart source

Aerial view of the village in Figure 3 comes from the internet. The rest of the figure, table are prepared and photoed by the author.

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