

Research on the Design Practice of Public Cultural Spaces in Traditional Villages in Jiangxi Province from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization: A Case Study of the Entrance Square Renovation Design of Yantai Village in Jingdezhen

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Abstract: With the comprehensive advancement of China's rural revitalization strategy, the protection and development of traditional villages are confronted with both new opportunities and challenges. As the core carrier of a village's material and spiritual life, the enhancement of public cultural space quality holds profound significance for sustaining rural cultural context and invigorating rural vitality. It took Yantai Village in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province as the research subject, expounding on the value and significance of public cultural space design in traditional villages. Subsequently, through field investigations, an in-depth analysis was conducted on the current issues of Yantai Village's entrance square. Finally, drawing on the design practice of the ancient village's entrance square, a renovation scheme was proposed with the objectives of "cultural regeneration, spatial activation, and industrial empowerment", aiming to provide a practical reference model for the renewal of public spaces in homogeneous traditional villages.

Keywords: Rural Revitalization; Traditional Ancient Villages; Public Space Design; Yantai Village; Square Design.

1. Introduction

In the process of continuous socioeconomic development, the original synergistic relationship between economic development and cultural ecology in traditional villages has gradually been disrupted, while villagers' demand for spiritual and cultural life has increasingly grown. Public cultural spaces serve not only as spiritual landmarks for promoting and inheriting local culture but also as material embodiments of village social structures and cultural identity. Yantai Village, a traditional ancient village with a long history, preserves a relatively complete cluster of architectural complexes from the Ming and Qing dynasties and was once an important node for the production and trade of Fuliang tea. However, its entrance square area currently faces certain problems and fails to meet the dual needs of contemporary village life and rural tourism development. Based on this context, this study selects the entrance square of Yantai Village as the object of design practice, aiming to explore how design methods can enhance the quality of public cultural spaces in traditional villages under the perspective of rural revitalization, turning them into iconic representations of ancient villages.

2. Significance of Renovating Public Cultural Spaces in Traditional Villages in Jiangxi

2.1. To Inherit the Cultural Style of the Village

The origin of villages is the result of human evolution and the development of human civilization. As a concept possessing both diachronic and synchronic characteristics, it carries the transformation of human civilization history [1]. The cultural landscape of a village is a dynamic system

composed of material forms, collective memories, and daily life practices. Traditional villages in Jiangxi are mostly inhabited by clans and are deeply influenced by clan culture and regional culture. Their public cultural spaces often serve as important spatial carriers for cultural inheritance, acting as focal points for historical memory, village regulations, and festival rituals. Designing these spaces holds profound and multi-layered practical significance—it is not merely about beautifying the physical environment but involves organizing and recreating the collective memory of the village. By transforming intangible cultural symbols, historical events, and traditional crafts into tangible spatial elements and landscape facilities, we can achieve the living continuation and contemporary translation of indigenous cultural genes while strengthening villagers' cultural identity and pride.

2.2. To Protect the Traditional Architecture of The Village

In traditional villages in Jiangxi, traditional architectural spaces often carry crucial information about the historical development of the village, constituting a "spatial gene bank" for public cultural activities. However, due to lack of maintenance and aging over time, many traditional buildings are accelerating their deterioration or even collapsing. Meanwhile, some villagers, in order to adapt to modern living needs, privately modify or demolish traditional structures, leading to the frequent emergence of new-style buildings and high-rise modern residences within ancient villages. Public spaces play a pivotal role as hubs and converters in protecting traditional village architecture. They are not just physical places but core media connecting protection and development, tradition and modernity, individuals and communities. Streets and public spaces within villages provide venues for villagers to communicate, ensuring their social needs are met [2].

Traditional buildings often face demolition or decay because they are perceived as outdated "historical burdens" unable to satisfy modern lifestyle requirements. The creative intervention of public spaces precisely constructs a critical interface between historical preservation and contemporary demands.

2.3. To Improve the Ecological Environment

In terms of site selection and layout, natural geographical environments and resources constrain the morphological patterns of villages, resulting in different spatial textures and customs [3]. Most ancient villages in Jiangxi are situated in beautiful natural landscapes following the traditional concept of "backing mountains and facing water, with yin behind and yang in front," preserving good ecological foundations such as forests, water systems, and farmlands, forming an interwoven landscape system of nature and human construction. However, with the advancement of rural modernization, newly built modern structures and continuously widened roads have fragmented originally intact ecological corridors and visual landscapes within villages. Meanwhile, numerous disordered public spaces still existing in ancient villages continue to trigger irreversible degradation of the village ecological environment. Therefore, while committing to protecting traditional buildings and tangible cultural heritage within villages, we must also fully emphasize the systematic maintenance of the natural ecological environment and actively construct well-ordered public spaces to achieve sustainable ecological development of villages.

3. Current Status of the Entrance Square Design in Yantai Village, Jingdezhen

3.1. The Singleness and Confusion of Space Function

Currently, the square in Yantai Village essentially functions as a hard-paved traffic buffer zone with unclear functional positioning. Apart from fulfilling basic transportation functions such as vehicle meeting and temporary parking, it lacks clearly defined areas for leisure, gatherings, or cultural exhibitions. The space remains undefined and unmanaged, with unauthorized vendors occupying most of the square area for stalls. This causes the originally intended leisure space for villagers to become overcrowded, affecting aesthetics and posing safety hazards, making it difficult for both villagers and tourists to linger, thereby hindering effective public activities.

3.2. The Lack of Cultural Characteristics

In the existing site, there are almost no elements reflecting the historical culture of Yantai Village. Its materials, forms, and landscape elements fail to draw inspiration from local materials, traditional crafts, or natural geography. Instead, generalized and de-regionalized modern design vocabularies are adopted, causing the space to lose intrinsic connections with local historical contexts, climatic conditions, and living habits, becoming a transplanted landscape "suspended" outside the native context. The paving patterns are ordinary, the greenery is messy, and there are a lack of landmark structures or public artworks. As the "entrance" to the village, it fails to serve as a narrative prologue or spiritual preview, creating a stark contrast with the profound historical and cultural heritage inside the village (Figure 1).



Fig 1. Current status of Yantai Village entrance square

3.3. The Lack of Infrastructure and Low Quality

The site lacks rest facilities, such as cultural activity centers and sports fitness equipment. The few existing seats are dilapidated and cannot meet daily villager needs. The nighttime lighting system in the square has significant defects, failing to meet basic functional requirements and posing safety risks. Greenery configuration lacks design, failing to create adequate shading and landscape effects. Infrastructure such as drainage, water supply, and electricity is also imperfect. Drainage ditches are not precisely aligned with site slopes and catchment areas, leading to localized water accumulation after rainfall, eroding the pavement base. Water supply points are unevenly distributed, with blind spots in irrigation systems and public drinking facilities. Electrical conduits are buried too shallowly with insufficient interface

points, restricting nighttime lighting and activity power needs. These infrastructure issues severely affect the appearance of the traditional ancient village.

3.4. The Safety Hazards Caused by the Interweaving of People Flow and Traffic Flow

Within the current square area of Yantai Village, mixed pedestrian and vehicle traffic is prominent, lacking clear separation designs. Narrow roads serving motor vehicle traffic simultaneously encroach upon safe buffer spaces for pedestrians. Road designs lack clearly demarcated walking areas, speed-reduction facilities, and visual warning systems. With many elderly people and children in the village, this not only threatens their personal safety but also disrupts the tranquil and comfortable public atmosphere that squares

should embody.

4. Renovation Design Practice for the Entrance Square of Yantai Village, Jingdezhen

4.1. The Project Background

Yantai Village, honored as a "Famous Historical and Cultural Village of China," is located at the northernmost end of Jiangcun Township, Fuliang County, Jingdezhen City, Jiangxi Province, situated at the border between Jiangxi and Anhui provinces. It is an ancient village with nearly 2,000 years of history. Located in a valley area, it provides ideal natural conditions for tea tree growth. The village currently retains 222 traditional residential buildings, among which 63 are complete structures from the Ming and Qing dynasties, and over 140 feature Huizhou-style architecture. The entrance square targeted in this renovation design is located just outside the village gate, serving as a key node between Fuchun Bridge and the concrete bridge, and also as the "first impression zone" for tourists entering the village. Its eastern side borders the Yanxi Riverbed, the western side leans against a gentle sloping woodland, the northern side connects via Fuchun Bridge to an ancient path on the opposite bank, and the southern side leads through the village gate into the internal alleys of the ancient village.

4.2. The Project Overview

This project primarily aims to protect the architectural culture of traditional ancient villages in Jiangxi by renovating the entrance square of Yantai Village to address existing problems. From the colored plan view, the overall site undergoes spatial layout modification and organization based

on the original form (Figure 2), integrating functions such as leisure, entertainment, gatherings, and cultural creative activities. Functions are divided into eight zones: entrance landscape area, square activity area, sports and leisure area, rest area, green isolation area, recreational entertainment area, waterfront landscape area, and parking lot (Figure 3). In terms of design concept, local traditional cultural elements of Jingdezhen are extracted and transformed, applying Yantai Village's tea culture, ceramic culture, and Huizhou architectural symbols into the square design. Regarding spatial layout, the entire design revolves around a teacup-shaped fountain in the center of the square, with rest areas divided into dynamic and static zones, ensuring smooth circulation and reasonable functionality.



Fig 2. The project colored plan view. Source: Self-drawn



Fig 3. The project functional zoning map

4.3. The Extractive Application of Local Cultural Elements

4.3.1. The Application of Huizhou Architectural Cultural Elements

Located at the Jiangxi-Anhui border, Yantai Village's architectural style is deeply influenced by Huizhou architecture, with over 140 ancient residences predominantly

featuring Huizhou characteristics. In the entrance of square renovation design, extracting and applying Huizhou architectural elements is undoubtedly a crucial design approach. Firstly, the contour lines of horse-head walls are extracted and used as modeling languages for landscape walls and signage feature walls, forming a continuation of visual symbols. Secondly, surrounding chaotic buildings are uniformly restored incorporating Huizhou architectural

elements, positively impacting the inheritance of Huizhou architectural culture while enhancing regional awareness (Figure 4).



Fig 4. The reflection of Huizhou architectural cultural elements in square renovation

4.3.2. The Application of Tea Culture Elements

Yantai Village possesses a profound tea culture heritage as the core production area of "Fuhong" Black Tea. In the entrance square design, the extraction and application of tea culture elements run throughout. The design adopts the concept of "welcoming guests with tea fragrance," making tea culture the cultural main thread of the square. Specifically, teapot shapes are abstracted into paving patterns, greenery motifs, and small feature models; forms of tea baskets and tea sifters are referenced to design distinctive landscape lights and trash bins; cultural feature walls are set up based on the golden award history of the "Tianxiang Tea House", narrating the glorious past of Yantai tea; and a teapot-shaped fountain is installed in the center of the square, allowing visitors to experience the tea fragrance ambiance while resting (Figure 5).



Fig 5. The reflection of tea culture elements in square renovation

4.3.3. Application of Wood Elements

In the renovation of Yantai Village's entrance square, the setting of the crop-drying and rest area is not merely a functional facility but a contemporary translation of local wood culture and rural life wisdom (Figure 6). Crop drying is a life scene passed down through generations among farmers in Yantai Village and even the entire Hui-Gan mountainous region, carrying villagers' expectations for harvest and love for life. Since Chinese Fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*) is a local building material characterized by long growth cycles, tough texture, and resistance to corrosion and insects, the main frame of the drying area uses Fir wood. Additionally, wooden benches are arranged around the drying racks, with backrests designed as flip-up drying boards. Normally serving as backrests, they can be flipped upward during the autumn drying season to become temporary drying surfaces, achieving multifunctional conversion of facilities. Storage

spaces beneath the benches are provided for storing movable drying tools. Around the Chinese Yew (*Taxus chinensis*) tree pools, low wooden stump seats are installed, with circular bamboo weaving patterns embedded in the seat surfaces. This area allows tourists to experience the "flipping and drying" activity, equipped with small-sized bamboo drying mats and wooden grain rakes, enabling immersive experiences of traditional drying culture through hands-on participation.



Fig 6. The reflection of wood elements in square renovation.

5. Conclusion

The protection and development of cultural landscapes in traditional villages have always been a focal point of academic research, serving as both the starting point and ultimate goal of studies on traditional village cultural landscapes. The renovation design of the entrance square in Yantai Village, Jingdezhen, represents a beneficial attempt at integrating the inheritance of ancient Chinese village cultural landscapes with the renewal of public cultural spaces. Starting from the regional natural conditions and respecting the inherent characteristics of the site, this project employs landscape design methods to reshape the image of the traditional village entrance by extracting and transforming local historical and cultural elements. While addressing existing problems in the village entrance landscape, it revives villagers' public living spaces, thereby better stimulating site vitality and enhancing the cohesion of village public spaces.

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