MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF UKRAINE
KHARKIV STATE ACADEMY OF DESIGN AND ARTS

Preservation and Renewal Design of Ethnic Villages in the Context of Cultural Memory: The Case of Shancong Hui Village in Huainan

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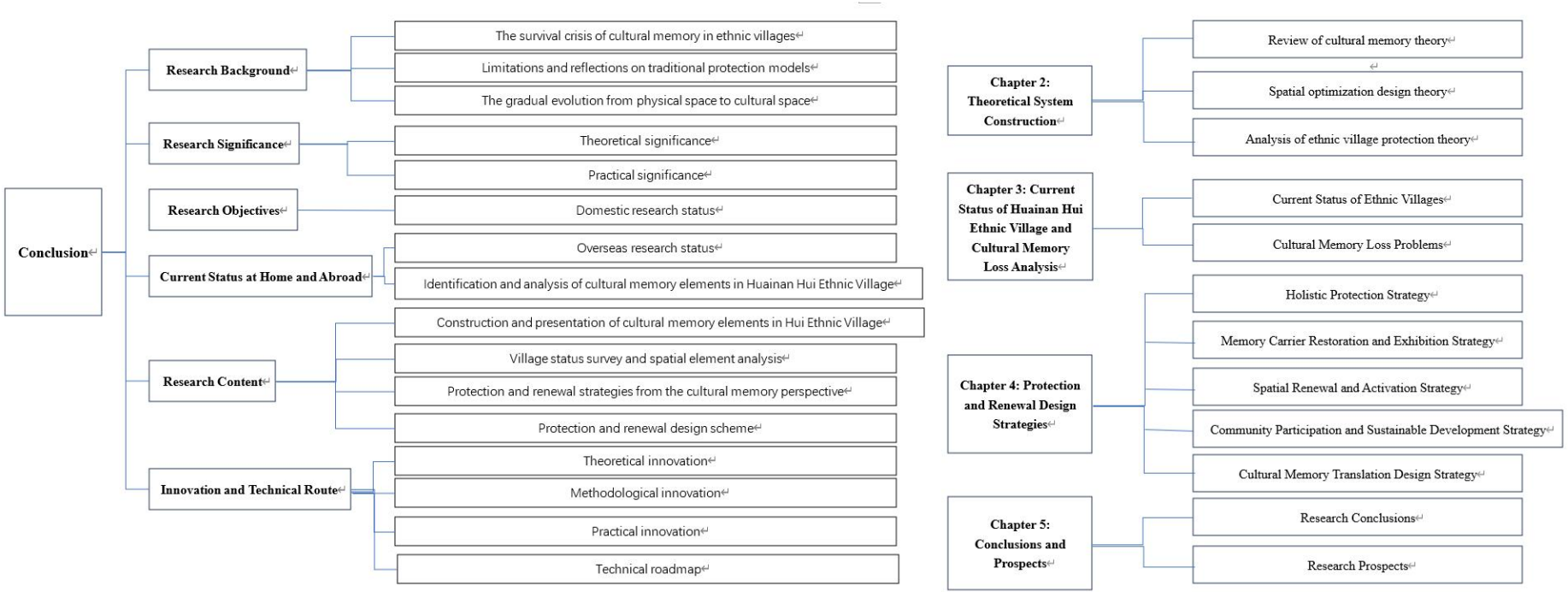
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Topic Introduction

Research Core: Conservation and Renewal of Ethnic Villages under the Theory of Cultural Memory
General Research Direction: Conservation and Renewal of Ethnic Villages
Research Object: Shanchong Hui Village, Huainan City
Entry Point: Cull Memory and Landscape Conservation and Renewal





Background of the Topic and Research Significance

一、Background of the topic

1、Policy background

In recent years, "cultural confidence" and "comprehensive rural revitalization" have become core directions of national strategy, elevating thection value of ethnic villages—serving as "living cultural heritage" and "carriers of collective memory"—to new heights.

Consecutive Central No. 1 Documents have expliciy proposed "strengthening the protection and inheritance of traditional villages and promoting the deep integration of cultural resources with rural development." Furthermore, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural DevelopmRequirements for the Compilation of Traditional Village Protection and Development Plans* emphasizes the need to "preserve the historical texture and cultural memory of villages, avoiding homogenized renewal that 'a thousand villages looking the same.'"





Background of the topic

From the perspective of cultural transmission, ethnic villages carry the language, skills, customs, and historical narratives of specific ethnic groups. For instance, the architectural forms of mosques, halal food techniques, and Eid al-Adha rituals in Hui villages are all important components of the diversity of Chinese culture. However, ethnic villages nationwirrently face a common dilemma of "memory loss." According to statistics from the Blue Book of Traditional Chinese Villages (2024), in the pas decade, 38% of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage in traditional ethnic minority villages are over 65 years old, and 29% of traditional buildings have suffered structural damagee to lack of maintenance. The protection model that "prioritizes physical restoration over memory transmission" has resulted in numerous "hollow villages" that possess architecture but lack culture. There urgent need to reconstruct the logic of protection with "cultural memory" at its core, providing a contemporary context and policy basis for research on the protection and renewal of ethn.



Research meaning



This study introduces the "cultural memory" theory into the spatial conservation and design of ethnic villages, overcoming the limitations of traditional preservation approaches that prioritize material aspects while neglecting cultural significance. It emphasizes villages as carriers of collective memory and arenas for cultural identity. By analyzing various memory media in Shanchong Hui Ethnic Village, the research reveals the spatiotemporal construction, transmission, and reconstruction of cultural memory, expanding the theoretical application dimensions in rural and ethnic settlements. Simultaneously, an analytical framework of "memory-space-identity" is established to support cultural value assessment and design interventions for ethnic villages, facilitating the transition of cultural heritage protection from "static preservation" to "living inheritance."

Research meaning

Shanchong Hui Ethnic Village, a typical Hui ethnic settlement in Anhui Province, boasts unique Islamic cultural traditions and distinctive settlement characteristics. However, amid urban expansion and population outflow, it faces challenges such as architectural deterioration, cultural disconnection, and spatial disorder. Grounded in the village's actual conditions, this study employs field research and participatory design to propose preservation and renewal strategies based on cultural memory activation. For instance, protecting and repurposing "memory anchors" like mosques, traditional courtyards, and historic streets enhances the spiritual essence of these spaces. Through design interventions, traditional festival venues and public spaces are restored to sustain cultural practices. The research outcomes not only provide actionable planning solutions for Shanchong Village but also offer replicable design paradigms for other ethnic minority villages facing similar challenges, contributing to cultural revitalization under the rural revitalization strategy.



Research meaning



Ethnic villages constitute a vital component of China's cultural diversity, and the preservation of their cultural memory is crucial to national cultural security and ethnic unity. This study systematically examines and visually presents the cultural memory of Shanchong Hui Ethnic Village, which helps enhance local residents' cultural confidence and identity recognition while motivating community participation in preservation efforts. The dissemination and exhibition of research findings can deepen mainstream society's understanding and respect for Hui culture, promote cultural exchange and mutual learning among ethnic groups, and provide practical support for strengthening the sense of community among the Chinese nation. On a broader level, this research advocates a development philosophy that respects diversity, preserves cultural heritage, and prioritizes human-centered approaches, offering profound social insights for building inclusive and sustainable urban-rural development patterns.



Example from practice

Xijiang Thousand-Household Miao Village, Guizhou

The Xijiang Thousand-Household Miao Village is situated in Leishan County, the Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, and is one of the larger Miao settlements. The village is built against the mountainside, with stilted houses unfolding in tiers along the slopes, creating a distinctive settlement landscape. The local Miao people' s traditional dress, songs and dances, silver jewellery, embroidery, batik, festivals and culinary culture constitute the village' s key cultural resources. The conservation and development of Xijiang Miao Village have adopted the approach of 'development through conservation, and conservation through development', integrating the display of ethnic culture, tourism development and increased income for villagers. In practice, cultural displays have been organised featuring silver jewellery, embroidery, batik, ancient songs and traditional festivals, whilst tourism operations have driven employment and increased income for villagers. The Guizhou Provincial Development and Reform Commission has noted that Xijiang Miao Village regards the protection of ethnic culture, the sharing of benefits and villager participation as key elements of its sustainable development.

The strength of the Xijiang Miao Village lies in its ability to transform ethnic culture into a driving force for village development; traditional songs, dances, costumes and handicrafts are no longer merely passively preserved, but have been reintroduced into contemporary life through exhibition and commercialisation. However, this model also presents certain challenges. As tourism expands, certain areas may experience over-commercialisation, a squeeze on residents' living space, and the reduction of culture to mere spectacle. Therefore, the lessons to be drawn from the Xijiang case for the Shanchong Hui Village must not be limited to the level of 'developing tourism'; it is more important to learn from its approach to organising cultural resources and involving villagers, whilst avoiding the simplistic packaging and excessive commodification of culture.





Zhaoxing Dong Village, Guizhou

Zhaoxing Dong Village, situated in the South-Eastern Guizhou region of Guizhou Province, is a prime example of a traditional Dong village. The village is characterised by its drum towers, wind-and-rain bridges, Dong dwellings and waterways; its traditional architecture is predominantly timber-framed, and communal life is closely intertwined with the drum towers, streets, alleys and waterways.

The cultural value of the Zhaoxing Dong Village lies not only in the architecture itself, but also in the Dong Grand Songs, festive celebrations, deliberations in the drum towers, timber-framing techniques, and the social relationships forged through the communal life of the villagers. The focus of its conservation is on maintaining the village' s traditional spatial structure whilst ensuring the continuity of Dong cultural practices.



The experience of the Zhaoxing Dong Village demonstrates that the cultural preservation of ethnic villages cannot focus solely on 'distinctive architecture' ; the connection between public buildings and traditional activities is equally important. The value of the drum tower lies not only in its unique appearance, but also in the fact that it has long served functions such as deliberation, social interaction and rituals.

This offers direct inspiration for the Hui village of Shanchong. When preserving traditional buildings in Shanchong, consideration must be given not only to the facades but also to the surrounding streets, alleys, courtyards and public spaces. Furthermore, practical venues for ethnic cultural activities should be retained, taking into account the needs of Hui festivals, culinary exchanges and social interaction amongst villagers.commodification of culture.



The Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama in Japan



The Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama are situated in the mountainous region of central Japan and comprise three villages: Ogimachi, Aikura and Suganuma. They were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995. Due to the heavy snowfall in the area during winter, the villagers have long developed a distinctive style of dwellings known as ‘gassho-zukuri’, characterised by steeply pitched thatched roofs. This architectural form is not only adapted to the local climate but is also closely linked to traditional productive activities such as sericulture. UNESCO notes that these villages are outstanding examples of how traditional ways of life have adapted to the natural environment and socio-economic conditions.



The experiences of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama demonstrate that traditional architecture cannot be preserved in isolation from daily life, livelihoods and the natural environment. The value of Gasshō-zukuri dwellings lies not only in their distinctive appearance, but also in the fact that they reflect the local inhabitants’ experience of adapting to climatic conditions and traditional ways of life. The lesson for the Hui village of Shanchong is that village conservation should begin with the overall spatial relationships, considering traditional buildings, streets and alleys, courtyards, the natural environment and daily activities as part of a single system. At the same time, the maintenance of traditional buildings cannot rely entirely on the government or design firms; it is also necessary to clarify the respective responsibilities of villagers, the village collective and the administrative authorities.

2. The ancient village of Holok, Hungary

The village of Hollókő, situated in northern Hungary, is a prime example of a traditional settlement of the Palóc people and was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987. The village was largely established between the 17th and 19th centuries and has preserved its traditional linear layout, narrow plots of land, dwellings, agricultural outbuildings, a church, and the surrounding farmland, orchards, vineyards, meadows and forests. UNESCO regards it as a prime example of the deliberate preservation of a traditional settlement and the continuation of rural life. What makes Holok Village unique is that it has not been entirely transformed into a static museum. The old village continues to serve as a venue for community activities, religious life, the display of traditional culture and provides some employment opportunities, whilst the surrounding land use is also incorporated into the overall conservation framework.



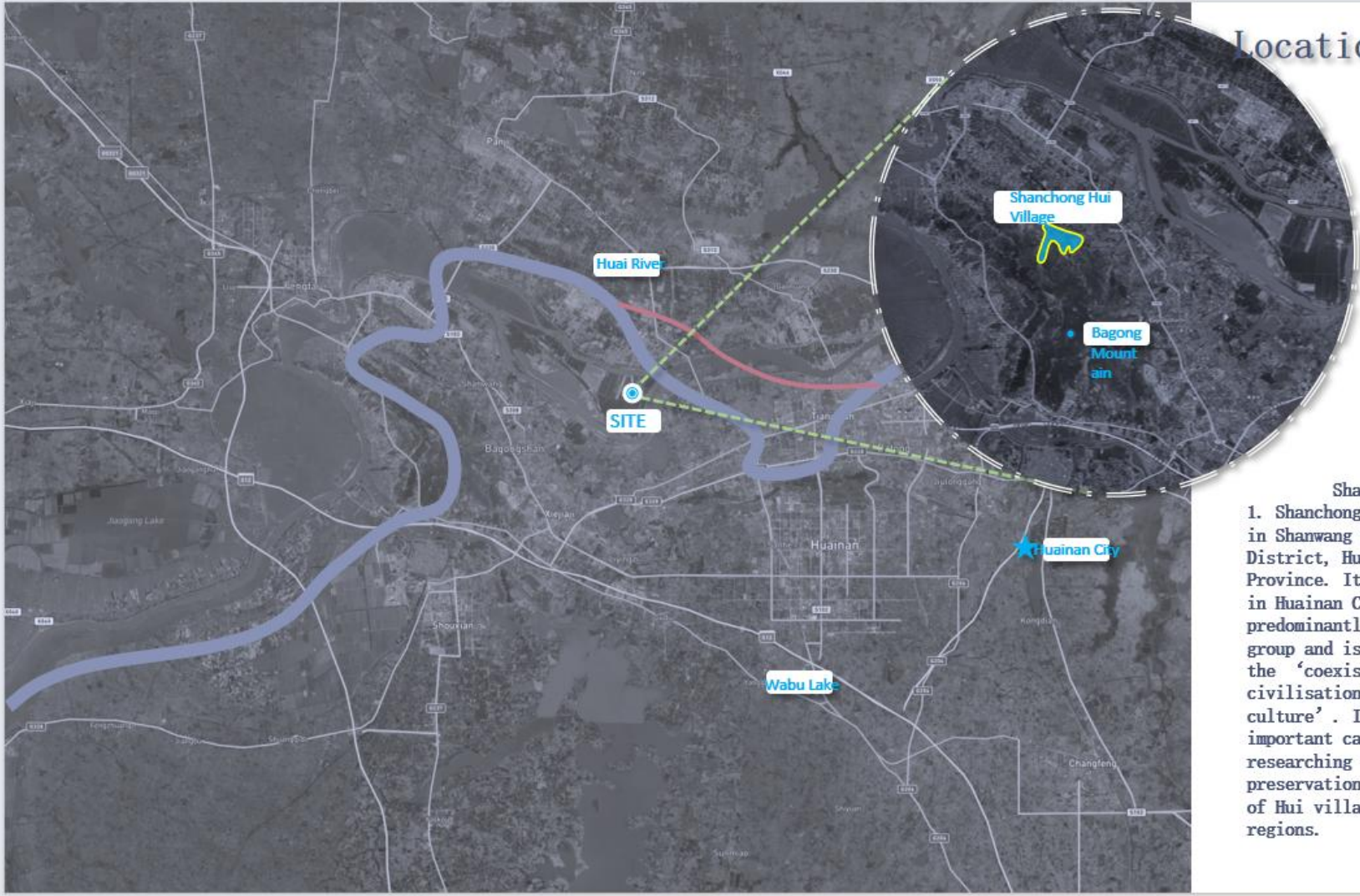
The focus of conservation in Holok Village is not simply to restore the appearance of a particular historical period, but to strive to preserve the village' s fundamental character as a living community. Traditional architecture, agricultural production, festive events and the daily lives of residents are interlinked, lending the heritage conservation a strong sense of continuity. The lessons to be drawn from this case for the Hui village of Shanchong are as follows: conservation and regeneration efforts should avoid transforming the village into a mere tourist attraction. The functional layout of traditional buildings and public spaces should serve the villagers first and foremost; whilst exhibitions, experiential activities and commercial ventures related to the village' s culture may be developed to a moderate extent, commercial functions must not be allowed to supplant everyday life.





Project Overview

Location Analysis



Shanchong Village:

1. Shanchong Village is situated in Shanwang Town, Bagongshan District, Huainan City, Anhui Province. It is the only village in Huainan City inhabited predominantly by the Hui ethnic group and is characterised by the ‘coexistence of agrarian civilisation and Islamic culture’. It serves as an important case study for researching the cultural memory, preservation and revitalisation of Hui villages outside frontier regions.

Village Layout Map

Shanchong Village is an ethnic minority administrative village under the jurisdiction of Shanwang Town, Bagongshan District, Huainan City, Anhui Province. It is located in the western hilly area of Bagong Mountain and has a population of 1,736, of which 83.1% are Hui people, making it the only ethnic minority village in Bagongshan District. The village still preserves a mosque built during the Xuanhe period of the Northern Song Dynasty and a millennium-old ginkgo tree.

Current status of satellite images



1 village community
2 guesthouse
3 Cultural Square
4 village committee
5 Hui Ethnic Primary School
6 Shanchong Mosque
7 Shanchong Village Main Gate
8 Lejian Rural Scenic Area

Analysis of Cultural Characteristics

The Temporal and Spatial Dialogue of Mosque Architecture: The Shanchong Mosque, initially constructed during the Xuanhe period of the Northern Song Dynasty, is one of the oldest existing Hui mosques in Anhui Province. Its main structure adopts the classical Chinese style of overhanging eaves and bracket sets, with a green dome and Arabic brick carvings creating a harmonious visual contrast. Inside the prayer hall, the "mihrab" (concave wall facing Mecca) and a millennium-old ginkgo tree (over 900 years old) jointly form a unique space characterized by "Chinese exterior, Islamic soul."







The living inheritance of religious festivals, such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, with complete preservation of religious rituals, sees villagers strictly adhering to the traditional sequence of "fasting – congregational prayer – sacrificial offering." Notably, these festivals have transcended religious boundaries to become cultural symbols that foster community identity.

Case analysis



Village roads



River pollution issues

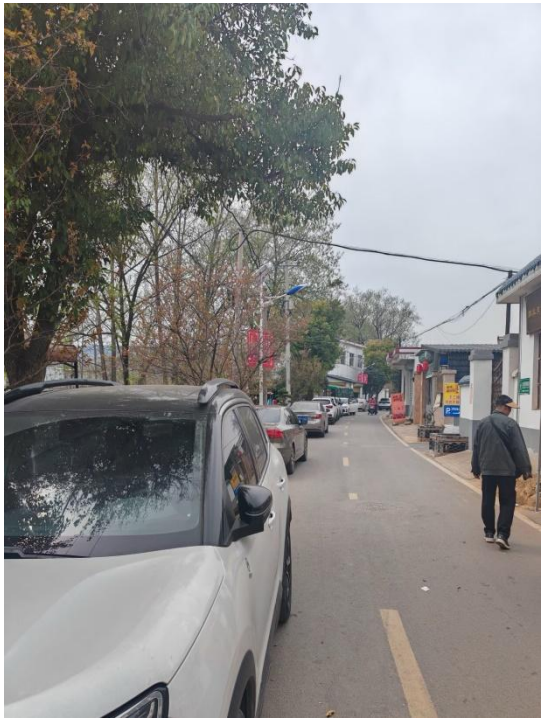


Ancient tree with a thousand-year history

Case Analysis







Tourist influx exceeds 100,000 yearly, yet environmental facilities are underutilized. The food street's connecting road has only two unsorted bins, with over 100 pieces of waste dumped daily, contaminating fruit orchards. No temporary restrooms along Industrial Road force visitors to use nearby facilities in peak seasons, raising soil nitrogen and phosphorus levels and causing peach tree diseases and pests in 2024. Imbalanced tourism development and lagging environmental infrastructure harm the village's ecosystem. Random parking worsens traffic congestion, disrupting residents' lives.

Case analysis





Originally serving as a spiritual hub for core religious functions including the distribution of Eid al-Adha oil and incense during Eid al-Adha celebrations, as well as congregational prayers during Ramadan, the Mosque Square was surrounded by traditional residential areas.





However, to accommodate parking demands during peak tourism seasons, one-third of the northern square was paved and converted into a temporary parking lot with a capacity of 20 compact vehicles.

Intent Chart









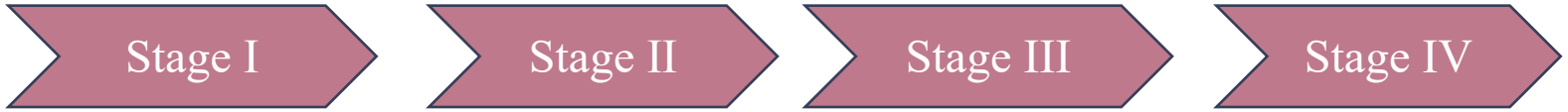
Position the mosque as the cultural core of the village, delineate a strictly protected zone, restore the architectural structure and remove unauthorized constructions in the surrounding area, and rehabilitate its function as a center for religious activities and community interaction. Optimize the main pathways leading to the mosque to create a ritualistic "memory axis."

Promote road hardening, rainwater-sewage separation, and underground installation of power and communication pipelines to address the basic living needs of villagers.



Final presentation

Research report



1.Preserve the original spatial relationships of the village..

2.Protect traditional buildings and living spaces

3. Continuing the functional use of public spaces

Maintain the connection between ethnic culture and the spatial environment.

Shanchong Village Committee

The project involves expanding and constructing the plaza for the Shanchong Village Committee, adding recreational courtyards and horticultural flower areas to facilitate activities and rest for local villagers.









Rural Homestay

Develop tourist guesthouses by leveraging the natural landscape of Shanchong Village. Built on wooden houses, they incorporate pastoral and scenic elements, while introducing a variety of functions such as agricultural experiences and cafes to cater to the needs of all age groups.







Shanchong Village Mosque



The Shanchong Village Mosque is one of the better-preserved mosques in Shanchong Village. Its design incorporates elements of the Hui ethnic group and combines features characteristic of Islamic architecture to carry out hard-surfaced paving renovations of the plaza outside the main gate. This includes the creation of gathering spaces, the addition of greenery, and the delineation of parking areas, facilitating visits and sightseeing for tourists.

Shanchong Village Main Gate















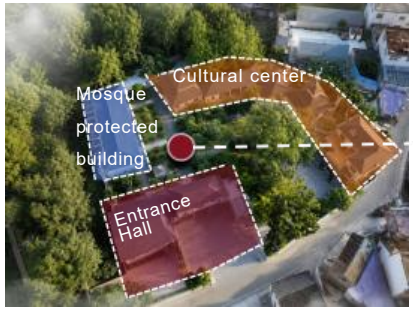
Shanchong Village Mosque

Within Shanchong Village Mosque, there exist buildings of varying sizes. The design project

incorporates a division between active and quiet areas. Based on the original mosque structures, cultural exhibition and collection spaces are added to enrich the mosque's functional activities and optimize the central courtyard.







Shanchong Village Streets



The streets and alleys of Shanchong Village are complex and irregular. The project aims to optimize the landscape of the main streets and the water street within the village, clean up garbage along the rivers and canals, add visitor rest areas and photo spots, and transform the spaces of the original street-side shops to unify the street style and enhance the commercial atmosphere.

Activation of Street and Alley Spaces in Shanchong Village













Cultural Square

Shanchong Village Cultural Square is located in the central area of Shanchong Village and serves as an important space for residents to exercise and interact. The design involves expanding the original square, adding cultural and news display boards, a children's playground, and other facilities, as well as elevating the central terrain of the square. During festivals, it can host singing and dancing performances to attract visitors and enrich the cultural life within the village.









Countryside Scenery

Shanchong Village boasts a beautiful environment, with designs that integrate natural scenery to create viewing platforms, family-friendly picking areas, and photo-taking spots. It revitalizes idle rapeseed fields and forest resources, adds wooden boardwalks, and meets the needs of diverse groups_____





Aerial view of Shanchong Village



Ask the teacher to criticize and correct