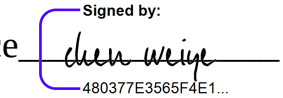
MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF UKRAINE
KHARKIV STATE ACADEMY OF DESIGN AND ARTS
Faculty of «DESIGN AND ARCHITEKTURE»
Department of «Environmental Design»

Chengweiye

Research on Spatial Renewal Design of Traditional Villages under Landscape Pattern Language: A Case Study of Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou

Qualification work for obtaining the SVO «Master»
in the specialty B2 Design
OPP «Design of the architectural and landscape environment»

The qualification work contains the results of own research
The use of ideas, results and texts of other authors must be referenced to the appropriate source



Scientific advisor: **Nataliia Tregub,** Ph.D. of architecture, Associate Professor of the Environment Design department Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (Kharkiv, Ukraine)

Kharkiv-2026

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Abstract

Traditional villages, as important carriers of historical and cultural heritage, preserve rich tangible and intangible cultural resources and serve as “living fossils” of regional culture and collective identity. Among them, traditional villages in the Jiangnan region are distinctive settlements with significant historical, cultural, artistic, and social value. Shaped by the characteristic water-town environment and a long-established agrarian culture, these villages have developed distinctive cultural traditions, while also offering strong qualities of livability and tourism, making them representative landscapes in which natural and cultural elements are closely integrated. However, under rapid urbanization and modernization, Jiangnan traditional villages are increasingly confronted with spatial decline, disruption of cultural continuity, and a growing mismatch between traditional functions and contemporary living needs, making their conservation and renewal increasingly urgent.

Previous studies have shown that landscape schema language provides a useful way to understand spatial form and cultural meaning. Based on this perspective, this study reviews relevant theories and practical cases of traditional village renewal in China and abroad, and then identifies the main elements, spatial analysis methods, and renewal principles of landscape schema language. It also develops an analytical framework that connects landscape schema language with traditional village space and clarifies a research path based on vocabulary extraction, syntactic analysis, and contextual interpretation. Taking Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou as the case study, the research combines field investigation with spatial analysis to identify its landscape schema features and explore how these features relate to cultural inheritance and regional spatial language. The study then proposes spatial renewal strategies through the translation of landscape schema language, with the aim of supporting the living inheritance and continued development of local culture, meeting contemporary functional needs while maintaining cultural continuity, and providing a practical basis for the sustainable renewal of Mingyuewan Village.

Keywords: Landscape Schematic Language ； Traditional Villages ； Spatial Renewal

Introduction: Research Background and Relevance

Research Objective. This study examines traditional village renewal from the perspective of landscape schema language, with Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou as the main case. The research has three related objectives: one is to review studies and practical cases in China and abroad, and to clarify the main theories, analytical ideas, and methods used in landscape schema research; another is to examine the cultural meanings contained in the landscape of Mingyuewan Village and identify the main elements that form its landscape schema vocabulary, while also considering current problems such as the weakening of local landscape identity and breaks in cultural continuity; the third is to explore renewal strategies that can retain the original character of the village while allowing its spaces to better support present-day living needs. Through these objectives, the study seeks to connect cultural conservation, spatial renewal, and regional identity within a clear design framework.

Research Tasks.The study includes four main tasks: 1) review the basic theories of traditional village conservation, landscape schema language, regional cultural landscapes, and spatial renewal, and compare representative cases in China and abroad to summarize useful methods for schema extraction, spatial organization, and cultural continuity; 2) investigate the historical development, natural setting, spatial structure, landscape elements, and current use of Mingyuewan Village; 3) identify problems related to landscape continuity, cultural expression, spatial organization, public-space use, and adaptation to contemporary life; 4) develop a spatial renewal framework based on landscape schema language and propose specific strategies for conservation, spatial translation, and design renewal.

Research Object.The research focuses on the identification, extraction, and translation of landscape schema language in the renewal of traditional villages, with Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou as the specific study area. It examines the village’s spatial structure, landscape features, regional cultural elements, and

potential for renewal, and uses these aspects to explore ways of coordinating traditional village conservation with contemporary development.

Research Theme. The study focuses on how landscape schema language can be identified, extracted, translated, and applied in traditional village renewal. Particular attention is given to the relationships among natural landscapes, settlement patterns, street and alley systems, public spaces, architectural forms, cultural nodes, and other regional landscape elements. By bringing these elements into a connected renewal strategy, the research explores how local cultural identity can be maintained while village spaces continue to meet changing spatial and functional needs.

Research Methods. The study combines literature review, case comparison, field investigation, spatial analysis, and schema extraction. These methods help identify the main spatial and cultural characteristics of the village, clarify the relationships among different landscape elements, and translate the identified patterns into practical renewal strategies.

Research Significance. This study introduces landscape schema language into the renewal of traditional villages and uses it to interpret both spatial structure and cultural meaning. At the theoretical level, the research moves beyond an approach that focuses mainly on the protection of physical forms and instead provides a clearer way to identify, understand, and translate regional spatial characteristics. It also places greater attention on Jiangnan water-town settlements, which helps broaden research that has often focused on mountainous or plain villages.

At the practical level, Mingyuewan Village retains a distinctive relationship among water systems, streets, buildings, public spaces, and cultural elements. By identifying waterfront spatial patterns and the rules that organize them, the study connects regional culture with spatial form and turns local cultural characteristics into design ideas that can guide renewal. The proposed approach aims to preserve the village’s cultural and spatial continuity while improving its current use, and can

provide useful reference for the conservation and sustainable renewal of other traditional water-town villages.

Research Innovation.Traditional village renewal often faces several problems, including similar conservation approaches, fragmented spatial analysis, and weak connections between research findings and design practice. This study responds to these issues by using landscape schema language to connect spatial patterns, cultural meanings, and landscape relationships within one renewal framework. Taking Mingyuewan Village as the case, the research translates identified schemas into specific spatial strategies and gives particular attention to the characteristics of Jiangnan water-town settlements. In this way, the study seeks to strengthen regional adaptation, cultural continuity, and the practical link between spatial analysis and renewal design.

Chapter 1 Literature Review in China and Abroad

1.1 Current Research on Traditional Villages

The study of traditional Chinese villages dates back to the 1930s， with most early work being devoted to old settlements，to vernacular houses，to architectural descriptions，or to field observations — systematic conservation came later .Now that urban areas are expanding quickly and the economy is growing strongly，many villages of traditional type have either gone away or been altered greatly，a fact that now compels the government to act in their defense.By 1982，the State Council had already named the first group of National Historic and Cultural Cities and various measures relating to conservation of old settlements were added later in the form of rules .From the time of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China onward， conservation at the national level has kept expanding，with 8155 traditional villages now accounted for—along with nearly 539000 traditional buildings and about 4 789 items of intangible cultural heritage (at the provincial or higher level) in such categories.

Domestic research has undergone change through time — it has moved on from isolated vernacular buildings to matters like settlement systems， spatial forms， local culture， or sustainable renewal .Since the 1980s there has been a tendency to consider not only function but also meaning， values， and full settlement integrity， and current work is beginning to use multiple methods (from different disciplines) in its analysis.Among the authors cited here — Tao Hui et al . — one finds an analytical use of digital media to discuss, in light of Taipan Village (in Guizhou), such topics as representation， identity formation， local practice， and relations of power in traditional villages .Shi Yang et al .applied GIS - based spatial overlay methods， graph-based thinking， and minimum spanning trees to analyze the relation of spatial efficiency to the survival of cultural elements， and they offered numerical backing for conservation planning， for continued building traditions， and for the preservation of regional culture.

Among the international studies of traditional villages, the investigation of settlement form， of cultural value， and of social structure began earlier .A .Meitzen worked on a typology of village morphology at an early date and analyzed in detail the major determinants of settlement form， something that later bore fruit in planning for rural areas and for settlements .Roland Lin concentrated on the relation between traditional village conservation and tourism development in Japan， particularly with regard to the challenges of rural depopulation and of marginal settlement decline .Mario Pisani and Fabio Piscopo dealt with traditional villages—historically and culturally—as well as architecturally and spatially， whereas Daniel Kulp took up the question from a sociological angle .On the basis of fieldwork at Phoenix Village (Guangdong)， Kulp analyzed social life of the village， its culture， and personal relations， offering one of the key references for later work on the social character of traditional settlements .

1.2 Current Research on Schema Language

Schema ideas were originally introduced by cognitive psychologists .At an early stage of study, such constructs helped to account for human orientation with respect to surroundings, or for the organisation of new data by means of prior cognitive structures .Later on, the logic involved was applied to architecture, to environmental planning and to spatial analysis .With co - authors, Christopher Alexander has proposed the idea of a pattern language .He interprets regular spatial repetitions as patterns， entities that may be recombined and applied in various specific contexts or locations .Rather than assuming spatial forms to be independent, self-contained objects， his theory treats spatial arrangements as results of interaction among many elements working at several scales and in multiple hierarchies .Such a framework is very helpful for analysis:it enables one to locate spatial features， to simplify complex morphologies， and to derive design guidance from observations made in the field.

Among scholars not working in architecture or urban morphology there is now a broader use of pattern language—applied to environmental psychology ， to landscape perception ， to placemaking and to lived space .Iwańczak and Lewicka undertook an empirical test of Alexander ’ s framework with Warsaw as their case study .They made use of 1 ， 310 panoramic photographs to isolate 68 spatial configurations and to examined how such spatial patterns might be tied to environmental affect or to aesthetic evaluation and to place preference .Their data make it clear that several recurring patterns are closely connected with positive environmental impressions .Later work avoided a purely morphological description of form .Now researchers look at combinations of patterns ， at their operation on multiple spatial levels， and at how configurations shift with different contexts or needs .The scope of study has grown to include spatial cognition， user - oriented experience and generative design ideas.

Chinese academic treatment of this subject came somewhat late ， but now has a collection of context - specific models based on landscape ideas .Wan Yanhua

and her co-workers tried to apply Alexander ’ s concepts to planning for traditional village conservation .They looked for means of meeting current needs (economic or social) without destroying local culture or identity .Meng Xiaoying examined Nordic modernist landscapes as well as the buildings of Alvar Aalto are to be considered here — with particular regard to the interface of built and natural elements .Wang Yuncai ’ s group laid out a systematic treatment of landscape schema language and of its organisation;they tested their ideas by means of such cases as the Jiangnan Ecological Park .Later contributions brought schema analysis to bear on built forms , vernacular housing types, land-use patterns, hydrological networks and settlement forms .The application boundary has been broadened to include village public space planning, ecological rehabilitation , landform dynamics and adaptation strategies .Zhang Jinhao and his co-workers used schema language to analyze, to isolate and to interpret spatial genes at Zhongxie Village .Their work goes well beyond a passive description of the locale, offering reliable means of identification and of design-related action (i.e., implementation) in specific cases.

1.3 Research on Traditional Village Renewal Based on Landscape Schema Language

Studies of traditional village renewal—using the idea of a landscape schema language—now draw upon a range of disciplines rather than developing along one strictly defined path .An influential theoretical contribution is offered by Wang Yuncai and his associates, who set forth a schema language with approximately 5000 words and with 30 or so syntactic groupings of rules .Within this framework spatial items count as basic vocabulary, and their interrelations are analyzed in terms of nested scales or of transformations .Though the model leaves room for unexplained details of village space, it yields an intelligible method of reading the layout and the linkages of landscape elements.

With regard to applied research， schema language has been applied above all to traditional spatial forms， to settlements ， and to certain patterns of spatial change .That usage is especially apparent in work dealing with the water - town areas near Shanghai， Nanjing ， or Hangzhou， where it has allowed comparison of old spatial configurations with subsequent developments .Here its value does not come primarily from re-creating past arrangements but from identifying spatial relations—possibly long-standing—that help bind new ideas to the area's historical character.

A number of limitations seem hard to avoid altogether .Much of today's research continues to concentrate heavily upon urban morphology ， with too little attention given to the particular dynamics by which traditional village forms are shaped or redefined (or sustained) over time .The relation of fine - scale form analysis to meso - scale control of space remains unclear， particularly where physical form coincides strongly with land ownership or property lines .None of these problems invalidates the utility of schema language， but they show that its use for village renewal calls for additional care—both theoretically and methodologically.

Chapter 1 Summary

Studies of traditional villages by scholars today go beyond a simple record of architecture， to include spatial organisation， cultural persistence and ways of achieving sustainable renewal .Drawing upon cognitive psychology and upon Christopher Alexander ' s Pattern Language， schema language gives an analytical handle on relations between separate spatial features .Applied to cases of village regeneration， it proves very useful in identifying recurring spatial forms and local peculiarities .Stil， lthe framework has definite limitations .Present-day research does not yet clarify completely the causal roots of change in village spatial form， nor is morphological study tightly connected to practical renewal work.

Chapter 2 Spatial Renewal Design for Mingyuewan Traditional Village in Suzhou

2.1 Analysis of Geographical Location of Ancient Mingyuewan Village

Mingyuewan Ancient Village is located in the southern part of Xishan Island in Taihu Lake. Its setting is shaped by both the lake and the surrounding hills, which have also influenced the form of the settlement. Historical records suggest that the village had already developed before the Yuan Dynasty. Over time, continued construction and gradual adjustment shaped the spatial structure that can be seen today. The village covers 6.41 km², including 279.75 mu of construction land, and has an average elevation of about 3.33 m.. Dominated by hilly terrain, the village presents distinctive geographical characteristics integrating mountains and waters. Adjacent to the riparian shoreline of Taihu Lake, the village is constructed in accordance with the natural hilly terrain, retaining a complete and stable spatial pattern of mountains and waters. Endowed with the superior water and soil resources of Taihu Lake, the village has formed a traditional rural production system characterized by the integration of agriculture and fishery. The long-standing production modes of agroforestry cultivation and lake fishing have profoundly shaped the overall spatial texture as well as the alley and courtyard morphology of the village. Furthermore, the original lakeside mountain-water landscape foundation and the inherited traditional agricultural production and lifestyle constitute the core material carrier of the landscape schematic language of Mingyuewan Ancient Village, and serve as the fundamental foundation and core support for the inheritance of the village's spatial form and the continuity of its rural landscape features.

2.2 Historical culture and the evolution of spatial pattern of Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou

Mingyuewan Village is located in the southeast of Xishan Island, Wuzhong District, Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province. Relying on the Taihu Lake forest and the Piaomiao Peak massif, it forms a unique landscape pattern of mountains and waters, making it a typical traditional water village in the Jiangnan region. The

development and evolution of the village are closely related to the regional natural environment, socio-economic structure and local cultural inheritance. Over a long historical period, its spatial form has gradually developed into a settlement structure based on water systems, with streets and alleys as veins and building clusters as the main body.

The history of Mingyuewan Village dates back to the Spring and Autumn Period. According to legend, King Fuchai of Wu and Xishi once admired the moon here, giving rise to culturally distinctive local legends. With the development of Wu-Yue culture and the prosperity of economic activities along the Taihu Lake shore, the village gradually evolved from an early waterside natural settlement into a traditional village with a stable spatial structure. During the Qing Dynasty, along with the development of agricultural production, commercial activities and clan culture, the village expanded continuously, forming a spatial system composed of ancestral halls, dwellings, streets, alleys and waterfront spaces. Influenced by the Jiangnan water-town environment, the spatial layout of the village at this stage showed typical characteristics of "nestling against mountains beside waters, streets built along rivers, and houses connected by lanes".

In the traditional society, Mingyuewan Village was mainly organized on the basis of clan ties and agricultural production. Its spatial form exhibited prominent living and regional characteristics. Most buildings in the village adopted the form of traditional Jiangnan dwellings, with courtyard spaces organized around courtyards and halls. Narrow alleys linked buildings to one another, creating a human-scaled and multi-layered spatial network. Meanwhile, the water system not only undertook transportation and production functions, but also connected important sites for daily life and social communication, constituting the unique waterfront landscape of the village.

In the stage of modern development, with the advancement of urbanization and changes in population structure, the traditional production modes of Mingyuewan Village have gradually transformed, and the functions of some spaces have been

adjusted. Traditional dwellings are confronted with problems such as idleness, renovation and functional transformation. The village space has gradually shifted from the original living-production system toward cultural display. In recent years, as the conservation of traditional villages moves forward, Mingyuewan Village has attached importance to historic environmental preservation and spatial revitalization. By restoring traditional buildings, optimizing public spaces and preserving the water-town pattern, the village integrates historical and cultural resources with the demands of modern life.

2.3 Analysis of Traditional Buildings in Mingyuewan Ancient Village

Mingyuewan Ancient Village preserves abundant architectural relics dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties. With rich architectural reserves and a complete conservation hierarchy, it forms a well-structured southern Jiangsu lakeside vernacular architectural cluster with distinctive regional features and serves as a typical carrier of traditional residential construction culture on Xishan Island of Taihu Lake. The village retains more than twenty traditional buildings of the Ming and Qing periods, including provincial-level and municipal-level cultural relic protection units as well as municipal controlled protected buildings. Together with a number of well-preserved vernacular dwellings, they constitute a hierarchical ancient architectural heritage system, which fully demonstrates the construction characteristics and human settlement concepts of rural buildings in the Taihu Lake region during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The traditional buildings in the village present clear chronological layers in their construction. The mid-Qing Dynasty represents the prime construction period, and most existing major buildings are courtyard-style halls erected in the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty. Typical examples include Lizhou Hall, Zhanrui Hall, Ningde Hall, Hansan Hall, Deng Clan Ancestral Hall, and Huang Clan Ancestral Hall, all featuring regular courtyard layouts and high integrity of remains. In addition, a small number of building relics from the Ming Dynasty are preserved, among which Dunlun Hall is the most representative. The superimposed

architectural remains of different periods form a village architectural pattern with temporal continuity and stylistic unity, which fully records the evolution of human settlement construction in Mingyuewan Ancient Village.

The overall layout and structural system of traditional buildings in Mingyuewan Ancient Village are highly adapted to the lakeside hilly geographical environment, forming a regional construction mode distinct from the plain-style dwellings in southern Jiangsu. In terms of layout, most local traditional buildings are one-to-three-story brick-wood courtyard structures. Following the central axis symmetrical principle, they are mainly oriented southward or southeastward, which precisely accommodates the humid, rainy, and hot climate of the Taihu Lake region and optimizes indoor ventilation, daylighting, and moisture prevention. The courtyards feature rhythmic spatial openness and delicately scaled patios, embodying the classic construction wisdom of southern Jiangsu dwellings characterized by shallow depth, low eaves, and exquisite patio design. Structurally, the buildings generally adopt a column-and-tie wooden frame system combined with lightweight walls and gently sloped roofs. The lightweight structural components are highly adaptable to the undulating terrain of hilly areas. Indoor spaces are flexible and transparent, with functional zones divided by wooden screens and partition decorations, ensuring practicality while enhancing spatial hierarchy and flexibility.

In terms of decorative craftsmanship and architectural aesthetics, the traditional buildings inherit the vernacular characteristics of the Xiangshan construction technique in southern Jiangsu and feature distinctive brick, wood, and stone carvings. Decorative carvings are widely applied on gate towers, beam frames, window grilles, and courtyard walls, and high-grade courtyards retain residual Su-style painted decorations. The carving themes mainly include landscapes, flowers, auspicious patterns, and ritual symbols, presenting a simple, elegant, and restrained aesthetic style. Different from the exaggerated and luxurious decorations of inland southern Jiangsu dwellings, the decorative system of Mingyuewan buildings forms

a plain and refined lakeside vernacular architectural temperament. Formed by local craftsmen adapting to the lakeside geographical conditions of Taihu Lake, this unique construction and decoration system inherits the essence of southern Jiangsu traditional craftsmanship and reflects the rural patriarchal etiquette and folk culture, representing an integration of architectural technology and humanistic connotation.

Overall, the traditional buildings of Mingyuewan Ancient Village feature standardized layouts and complete systems. From the overall courtyard arrangement and wooden frame structure to detailed decorative craftsmanship, they are well adapted to the lakeside hilly landscape and local production and lifestyle of the region. The site-specific construction logic, simple regional style, and spatially practical yet humanized design jointly shape the unique architectural texture of the lakeside ancient village and preserve the original form and construction wisdom of rural dwellings in the Taihu Lake region during the Ming and Qing dynasties. As a typical case of lakeside ancient village architecture in southern Jiangsu, Mingyuewan's traditional buildings embody both ecological adaptability and regional humanity. They serve as highly recognizable research samples of southern Jiangsu vernacular architectural heritage and possess significant value for the inheritance and conservation of architectural styles of lakeside ancient villages in southern Jiangsu.

2.4 Analysis of Current Problems in Mingyuewan Village Suzhou

Insufficient utilization of historical landscape resources and inadequate transformation of spatial value Mingyuewan Village preserves landscape resources with historical and cultural values such as ancient trees and water systems. At present, the spaces surrounding ancient trees are mostly open vacant land, lacking systematic spatial organization and landscape atmosphere. The existing site fails to fully tap the potential value of ancient trees as cultural nodes and public activity cores of the village. Consequently, there is an effective disconnection between historical landscape resources and surrounding daily life as well as tourist

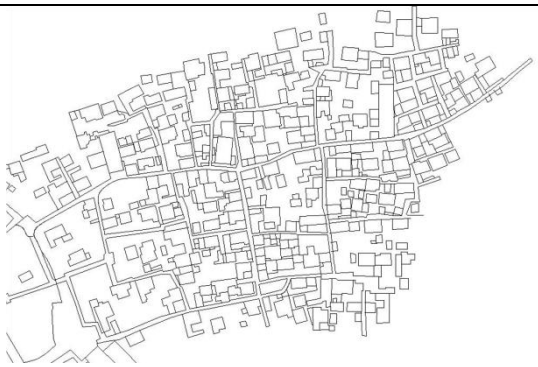
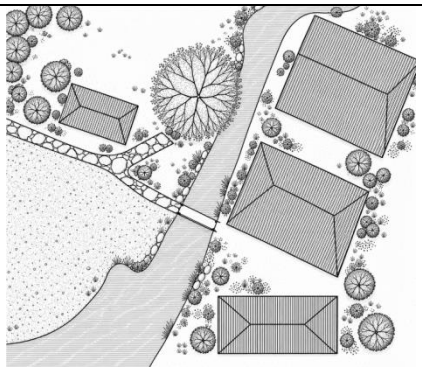
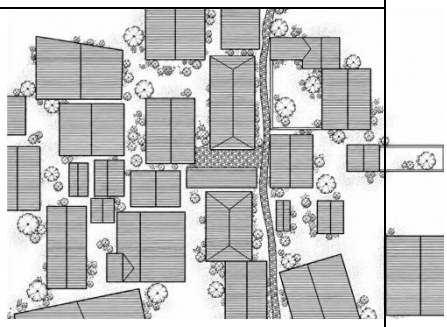
experience. Meanwhile, deficiencies in spatial layout and functional configuration make it difficult to form distinctive landscape nodes with functions for stay, communication and cultural activities.

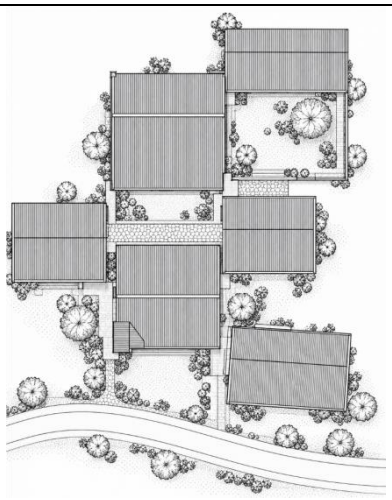
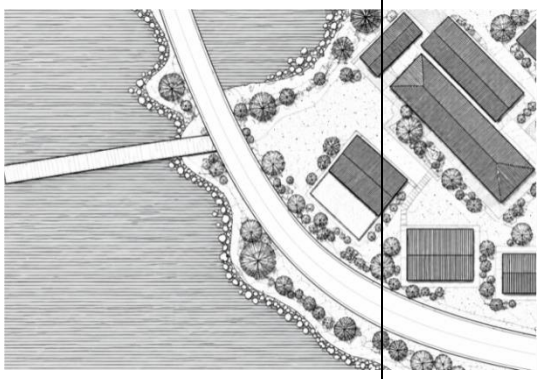
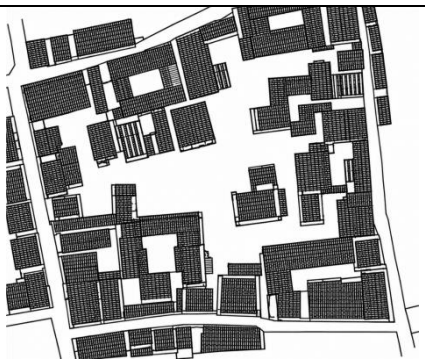
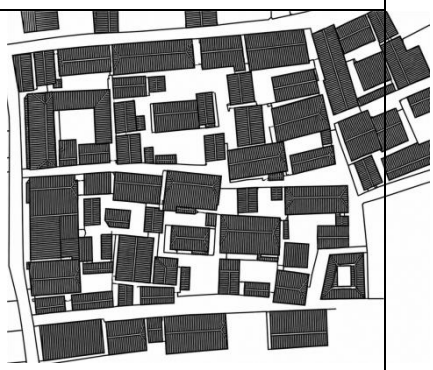
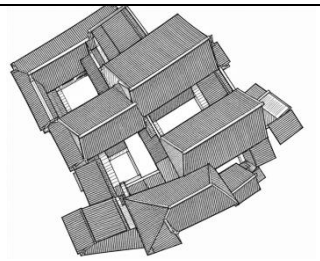
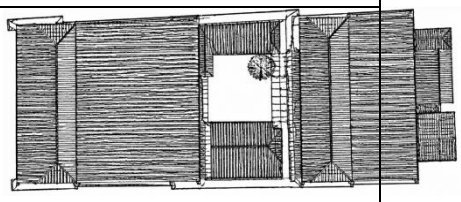
Insufficient characteristic expression of waterfront space and limited transformation capacity of water-town landscape resources. Relying on the Taihu Lake water system, Mingyuewan Village forms a unique waterfront environment. However, the existing river spaces mainly undertake basic transportation and landscape interface functions, lacking spatial experience design adapted to the water environment. Some waterfront areas are not equipped with continuous ecological trails, rest facilities and cultural exhibition spaces. As a result, the traditional "water-bank-village" spatial sequence is not fully manifested. The river landscape resources have not been effectively transformed into attractive public spaces with cultural experience for tourism, which restricts the further realization of the landscape value of the water town.

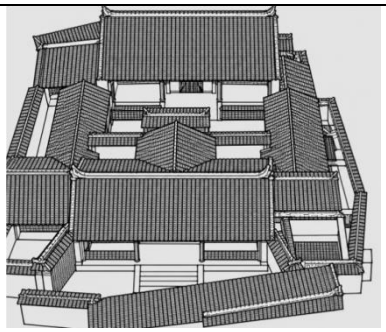
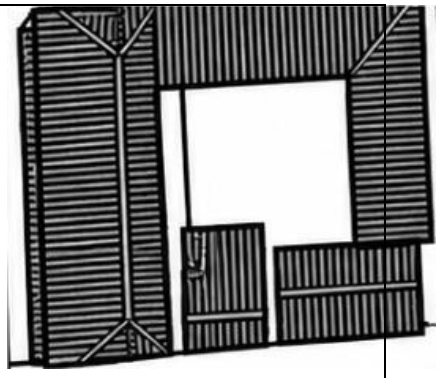
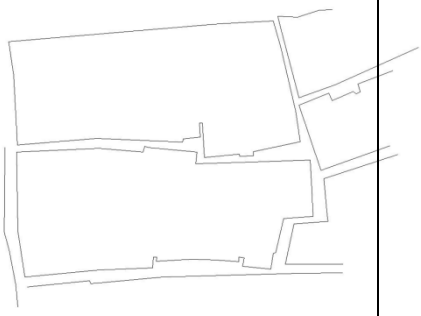
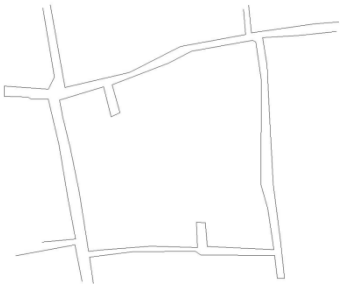
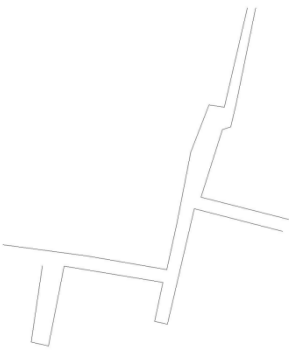
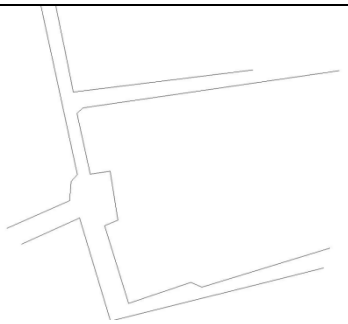
Insufficient allocation of public service facilities and imperfect functional foundation of tourism space. With the development of tourism in traditional villages, tourists’ spatial demands for rest, sightseeing, communication and cultural experience keep rising. Nevertheless, some tourism resources in Mingyuewan Village lack supporting infrastructure matching tourist activities, such as resting areas, landscape sketches, guidance systems and cultural exhibition facilities, making it hard for landscape spaces to form a complete recreational experience system. Meanwhile, the existing spatial functional layout fails to form effective connections with tourist behavior paths, which hinders the sustainable utilization of the village’s tourism resources.

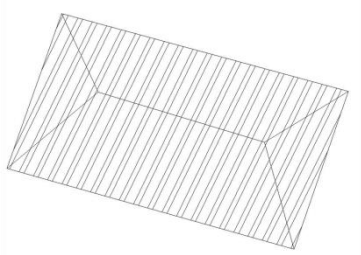
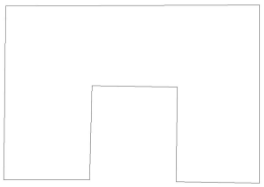
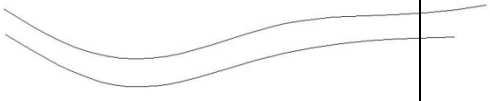
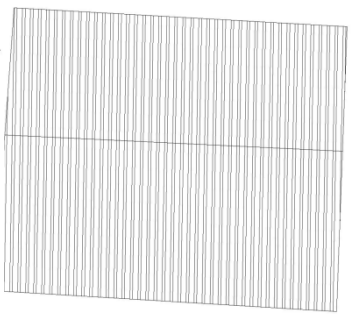
2.5 Extraction of Landscape Language

	Landscape Village Pattern

Sentence		
	Composite Space	
Phrase		
	Water Street Combination	Neighborhood Block Combination

		
	Street-house Combination	Waterfront Boundary Combination
		
	Pattern of Residential Combination	Pattern of Residential Combination
		
	Spatial Pattern of Ritual Hall	Spatial Pattern of Ancestral Hall

Phrase		
	Spatial Pattern of Ancestral Hall	Pattern of Residential Combination
	Linkage Space	
		
	Pattern of Street and Alley Network 1	Pattern of Street and Alley Network 2
		
	Pattern of Street and Alley	Pattern of Street and

	Network 3	Alley Network 4
Charac te		
	Temples and Ancestral Halls	Concave Courtyard (Ao-shaped Courtyard)
		
	Square Plot	Rectangular Block
	 	
	Curved Street and Alley	Residential House

To systematically identify the spatial organization of the traditional settlement of Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou, this study adopts landscape schema language as its theoretical foundation and conducts a hierarchical analysis following the sequence of "overall pattern identification—composite spatial induction—connection relationship extraction—basic vocabulary abstraction." At the overall level, the spatial framework of the village is first identified by treating the natural landscape, road system, and building clusters as a "sentence." This analysis reveals a characteristic landscape-village pattern in which the settlement develops in response to water, extends along circulation routes, and forms clustered spatial groups. On this basis, recurrent and representative spatial relationships are classified into composite patterns, including water–street combinations, neighborhood-block combinations, street–house combinations, and waterfront-boundary combinations. These patterns reflect relatively stable relationships among water bodies, roads, buildings, courtyards, and public spaces, and constitute the principal "phrases" of the traditional village spatial language.

The schema system is further refined through the analysis of architectural and connective spaces. Architectural space primarily includes residential combinations, the spatial configuration of Lihe Hall, ancestral hall spaces, and courtyard-based residential forms. Their common characteristics include enclosure, inward orientation, hierarchical progression, and courtyard linkage. Traditional dwellings are organized through basic units such as halls, side rooms, courtyards, and enclosure walls, producing ordered spatial compositions, while ancestral halls and ritual buildings exhibit more explicit axial relationships and spatial hierarchies. Connective space is mainly composed of the street-and-alley network. Streets and alleys link building clusters through linear, curved, turning, and branching forms, creating a pedestrian network of varied scales and flexible orientations. These routes not only serve circulation functions but also act as important spatial media connecting residences, courtyards, public nodes, and waterfront areas.

At the level of basic vocabulary, complex spatial forms are further abstracted into typical spatial characters, including temples and ancestral halls, concave courtyards, square plots, rectangular plots, curved streets and alleys, and residential units. These characters constitute the fundamental units of Mingyuewan Village's spatial language and generate spatial patterns at different scales through rules of enclosure, juxtaposition, linkage, turning, and penetration. Accordingly, the traditional spatial language of Mingyuewan Village demonstrates clear hierarchical and generative characteristics. Its overall structure can be summarized as follows: the natural landscape defines the settlement framework; the street-and-alley system organizes the spatial skeleton; buildings and courtyards form spatial clusters; and basic spatial characters constitute the local components. This organizational logic, progressing from the whole to the part and from complex configurations to basic units, reflects the adaptive relationship between Jiangnan water-town settlements and their natural environment, as well as their emphasis on neighborhood interaction and regional cultural continuity.

The extraction of spatial language in this study consists of four main steps. First, based on site surveys, existing-condition mapping, imagery, and field investigation, the overall village form, water system, road network, buildings, and public spaces are identified, and representative spatial samples are selected. Second, recurrent spatial relationships are classified to extract composite patterns such as water–street, street–house, neighborhood-block, and waterfront patterns. Third, these composite patterns are further decomposed into architectural spaces, street-and-alley networks, and courtyard relationships in order to analyze rules of enclosure, linkage, turning, and spatial connection. Fourth, the forms of buildings, courtyards, streets, alleys, and plots are geometrically abstracted into repeatedly identifiable basic characters, thereby establishing a hierarchical diagram of "character–phrase–sentence." Through this method, the complex traditional spatial morphology of Mingyuewan Village can be transformed into a landscape schema language system with explicit structural relationships and compositional logic,

providing a methodological basis for subsequent spatial translation and renewal design.

Chapter 3 Design Scheme

3.1 Overall Design: Continuation and Spatial Reorganization of the Landscape Village Pattern

The whole design is primarily directed toward the “ Landscape Village Pattern”which was analyzed above .The traditional arrangement of Mingyuewan Village — as it existed before modern times — was not shaped by an exact geometric logic;it came about slowly as a result of long - term relations among the Taihu Lake water bodies， the land contours， streets， alleys， and houses there .That gradual development has yielded a firm sense of en

vironmental adaptability and natural spatial growth .As far as the whole settlement is concerned， it is described by “ development along water ， extension along roads and aggregation into clusters， ”with roads and with water features forming part of an interwoven spatial pattern .The design does not replace the area ’ s basic water course or its waterfront limits or its established movement paths but keeps the old building groups — as well as their locations—as significant peripheral elements .Very large - scale rebuilding is kept at bay in order to avoid the creation of an unnaturally rigid spatial order .

With regard to the whole spatial configuration， the design keeps up with the old settlement logic of “ water systems defining spatial boundaries—streets and alleys organizing the internal structure—buildingsshaping spatial interfaces—landscape nodes embedded within the fabric .”A major body of water—on the west of the site—constitutes the basic natural frame， while the river on the east performs the func

tions as part of an internal hydrological network .The traditional residential clusters lie along the site’s periphery and on both banks of the water system， whereas the internal renewal area is planned—without strict separation—to make

use of public places and of various-sized natural features .Rather than treating the renewal area as a self-contained modern park， the present design sees it as an added element of the traditional village spatial pattern， and allows it to be incorporated cohesively with the streets， the buildings， and the water bodies already there.

When considering the general layout， the design does not attempt to fix one central axis .Rather ， it uses curvilinear paths， distributed nodes， and looped areas for the organization of movement .The main route links the village entrance with the waterfront， with old houses ， with ancient - tree locations， with water elements of the landscape， and with major public nodes， while smaller roads lead still farther — to gardens， to courtyards， or to waterfront spots .With intersections ， turns， loops， or branches， the path network acquires a topological form resembling that of traditional streets and alleys and offers a continuous spatial sequence of " entry—turning—opening—enclosure—pause—re - entry ."

What is described here is a modern reinterpretation of the classic " sentence - level"schema .The landscape village pattern is not copied whole-sale as a rigid physical arrangement;it still operates — in its basic logic — as an ordering principle for the design .Water is retained as the central factor of spatial planning ， roads continue to be the structural means of joining various parts of the site， buildings are allowed to shape spatial interfaces without being excessive ， and landscape nodes offer room for culture， for people， and for recreation .With such an approach ， the design finds an integrated solution that joins the traditional layout with present-day functional needs .

3.2 Waterfront Interface Node: Ecological Translation of the Waterfront Boundary Pattern

Among the elements of the waterfront area there is one—distinctively—capable of helping to express the particular character of the Jiangnan water - town

landscape， a fact that corresponds with the earlier “ Waterfront Boundary Combination .”The traditional waterfront of Mingyuewan Village is not only the boundary of a given water body， but a complex entity involving both surface and shore， paths， growths of vegetation， structures， and human action of daily life .Spatial worth is found in a continuous relationship between land and water—not in an absolute division of nature from village form .

With this pattern as a basis， the design takes the western waterfront of Taihu Lake and the internal river channel on the east side to be part of one continuous landscape system .Near the water， naturally formed shores， stone revetments， wetland vegetation， or weeping willows may be used to make an ecological edge less rigid and to minimize the dominance of hard embankments of uniform type .A promenade along the middle zone is planned for leisurely movement or for sightseeing， with trees， flowering shrubs， seating areas， and small rests placed on the side facing the internal gardens and buildings .Such organization produces a gentle progression through space of “ water—shoreline—vegetation—path—village .”

The organization described is essentially a reinterpretation of the conventional waterfront boundary pattern .Water continues to be part of the natural vocabulary ， but such former waterfront uses as production， washing， gathering of water ， or transport are no longer dominant — instead they become， in today’s context， ecological or recreational or culturally meaningful functions .A number of small， usable waterfront areas （seating， viewing places） are added so as to turn the shoreline not only into something seen but also into a physical space that may be approached， entered upon， and lived with.

At the same time， the planting design does not call for excessively regular landscape belts .Rather， it takes up naturally developed forms of traditional waterfront vegetation—trees， shrubs， aquatic plants， or natural stones—and

arranges them irregularly .Such treatment respects the natural character that has been part of the historical waterfront and at the same time increases ecological buffering along the shore， so that the newly formed waterfront may combine local tradition with a modern ecological advantage .

3.3 Landscape Water Feature and Pavilion Node: Experiential Translation of the Traditional Waterside Courtyard Pattern

Small-scale landscape water features and pavilions are now being considered for the northern area of the site — an approach suitable for the special spatial character of Mingyuewan Village， in which both water and architecture are closely linked through location .The water is bounded by a natural， curvilinear form and is approached along adjacent paths， while such elements as trees， rocks， or aquatic growth help to moderate the artificial quality of the boundary .

The pavilion lies on one side of the water—not at the exact geometric middle—thus conforming to an established Jiangnan garden idea of placing buildings near the water body .At each stage of arrival along the path， the visitor sees—by turns—some part of the water, of the plants, or of the pavilion, from a new angle ， with a continuing and never static visual development.

With regard to schema language， this node incorporates multiple spatial forms—namely the“water–street combination ，”“ waterfront boundary ，”and “ building–water relationship .”The water body is treated as natural spatial vocabulary ， the pavilion as an architectural one ， and the vegetation or paths as means of connection .By juxtaposing ， enclosing ， or circumnavigating ， one may arrive at a composite spatial configuration of this sort .Traditional notions of “ dwelling by the water”and “ creating scenery through water”are now realized (in modern terms) as experiences of rest and of movement along or near the water .

This node is designed—on purpose—to be of limited size, with a calm character and an eye to visual pleasure， so as to complement (rather than

compete with) the more active central area of public life .It offers suitable places for brief rest or contemplation, as well as for the reinforcement of spatial form and of the traditional Jiangnan character—water-based, settled, historical.

3.4 Street and Alley Network Node: Contemporary Organization of Traditional Connectivity Patterns

Streets and alleys are among the most significant connective elements of the spatial arrangement found in Mingyuewan Village .Earlier work has cataloged several such “ Patterns of Street and Alley Network , ”—namely linear , angled , branching , winding , or turning forms .Instead of being laid out as a uniform grid of roads , the routes evolved slowly with time , thanks to joint action of the built environment , of water , and of practical spatial uses—hence showing marked adaptability to local conditions.

From this point of view , the internal circulation system of the present design does not rely on orthogonal roads .Rather , a fairly adaptable arrangement of curves , turns , junctions , and loops is adopted .Major landscape or village elements are linked by primary paths ; secondary paths go farther—into zones with trees or with buildings—and still smaller paths approach the water or rest areas .All such routes—however varied—serve to create a well-organized multi - level circulation system .

If we consider the language of schema , curved streets and alleys may themselves be regarded as spatial basics .Several street - or - alley characters—when intersected or linked or turned—constitute “ phrase - level”connective spaces , which help to shape the more general “ sentence - level”configuration of the village .Road design is not assumed to be a purely autonomous landscape factor , but rather an essential means by which the whole spatial schema is formed and ordered in a coherent way.

Important nodes call for selective widening of paths—so that one may stop or gather without strain;near buildings，the scale of the space is reduced to help create an intimate approach;along the waterfront，paths curve with the shoreline .Thus the width，the direction，and the spatial nature of circulation routes come to depend upon local circumstances .Such variation in spatial rhythm corresponds well with the gradual, unending change of scale and of experience found in traditional streets and alleys of Mingyuewan Village .

3.5 Ancient Tree Cultural Node: Place-Based Expression of Core Natural Vocabulary

Mingyuewan Village still has many ancient trees preserved in its traditional spatial configuration .Such trees are valuable both ecologically and culturally—indeed, they help to recall or record the history of the village itself .Ancient trees commonly serve as links between streets，structures，and social areas (of activity) in ways that make places very identifiable .With this in mind，the present design takes the ancient tree seriously as one central “ character”of the landscape language and stresses its spatial transformation.

The ancient tree node is laid out with regard to the idea of “ tree as the core ，circulation around the tree，and space for pause .”Areas of firm paving—large or dense—are kept away from the tree，with lawns and natural greenery used to help sustain roots and to preserve an ecological balance .Curved or looped paths are made to go round the tree，so that it remains accessible and visually dominant (rather than hidden) in relation to the whole site .

Among the items already recognized in prior work are square plots，curvilinear streets or alleys，and vocabulary taken from nature .The ancient tree is treated as a central spatial figure，the path as a link between places ，and adjacent lawns or seating （or planting） as part of the supporting vocabulary .All such elements — taken together — make it possible to have a public area for rest，for visual contemplation，or for cultural involvement .

From a functional standpoint, the ancient tree node is meant not only to be part of the landscape but also to recall cultural memory .Simple historical facts, village traditions, or places for rest may be associated with the tree — thus converting it from an individual natural item into a community memory node .With such spatial reinforcement comes an opportunity to arrange a sequence of " seeing the tree—circulating around it—pausing—understanding its cultural meaning, "and to make natural vocabulary once more meaningful culturally.

3.6 Central Circular Node: Translation of the Traditional Well Platform and Public Space Pattern

A circular public node—i.e., a space for gathering—is proposed in the southern part of the area as one of the most distinct such elements of the total design .Its shape is not simply the product of contemporary geometric logic , but of an abstract restatement of certain familiar village features (wells, open areas, zones of social contact) and of neighborhood life.

Traditional wells tended to be sited in parts of the settlement that were easily reached .Besides fulfilling their basic role of supplying water, they came naturally to serve as places of contact , of gathering , and of temporary stay .With this in mind, the traditional well area is to be understood as a spatial configuration which joins a " central facility"to a " public activity ."Such designs preserve the centralizing character of space by taking a water element or a well -like form as focal point (visually and functionally) , and by arranging round paths , seating , greenery , and planting to make a continuous spatial sequence.

With regard to the character level of the schema language , the circular center may now be considered a basic core of spatial vocabulary, and the adjacent ring path is linked—through its form—to the traditional connective vocabulary of streets and alleys .Starting from the center , various concentric spatial layers come together in a sequence of " core—pause—circulation—planting , "which helps define the node's individuality and also allows room for public life .

The design is not merely an exact copy of the physical type of traditional well platform .Rather，it keeps the social role of such a site — as one for gathering or meeting — intact，and turns an old item of daily infrastructure into a modern public space .The node is suitable for rest，for conversation，for limited activity，for observation，or for cultural reflection，and so illustrates how traditional configurations of space may persist even when their uses change over time.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

With regard to spatial renewal at Mingyuewan Village，the landscape schema language is not treated as a direct means of reconstructing tradition .Rather，it functions as an analytical framework—helpful in figuring out the rules of traditional spatial life—and in translating those rules into modern design concepts .A hierarchy is formed of such elements as the landscape–village configuration, streets and alleys, relations of water to streets, waterfront details, building groupings, courtyards, and elementary spatial units; from this hierarchy a system of design translation is built, going from the whole to the individual node or location.

On the general level，the design keeps the relation between the landscape and the village settlement intact .On the intermediate level，such traditional groupings—water–street，street–house，neighborhood block，or waterfront boundary—may be reinterpreted or modified .On the local level，spatial elements like trees（ancient or not），wells，pavilions，courtyards，houses，and streets or alleys are brought back and arranged in modern contexts .Such interrelations of levels help to maintain, even to revive, the spatial character and local identity of the village in its new setting.

At bottom，the design creates an integrated spatial structure with natural water systems forming its foundation，streets and alleys functioning as connective elements，buildings helping to fix spatial boundaries，landscape nodes to

organize activity， and vegetation to establish ecological continuity .It allows — without loss of focus — for sightseeing， recreation， cultural reading， or regular habitation by people and at the same time shifts the conservation idea away from passive form-preservation toward the renewal of spatial logic .Such an approach yields a working model (in landscape terms) of traditional Jiangnan water-town conservation and of its possible redevelopment.

Conclusion

The present study is directed toward Mingyuewan Traditional Village (in Suzhou) and considers the relationship of landscape schema language to spatial renewal .It looks at available theories about traditional villages and about schema language, as well as at the site's geography, history, spatial form, buildings of the past, and current issues—each relevant to Mingyuewan—and draws from them a representative example of landscape schema language.

With this assumption， design translation proceeds at several levels：one looks at the general spatial form， at the waterfront ， at landscape water bodies， at streets and alleys， at ancient trees and at public places .It is argued that traditional spatial arrangements may help in modern village renewal and in the planning of conservation-oriented settlements — in particular of the kind known as Jiangnan water - town villages.

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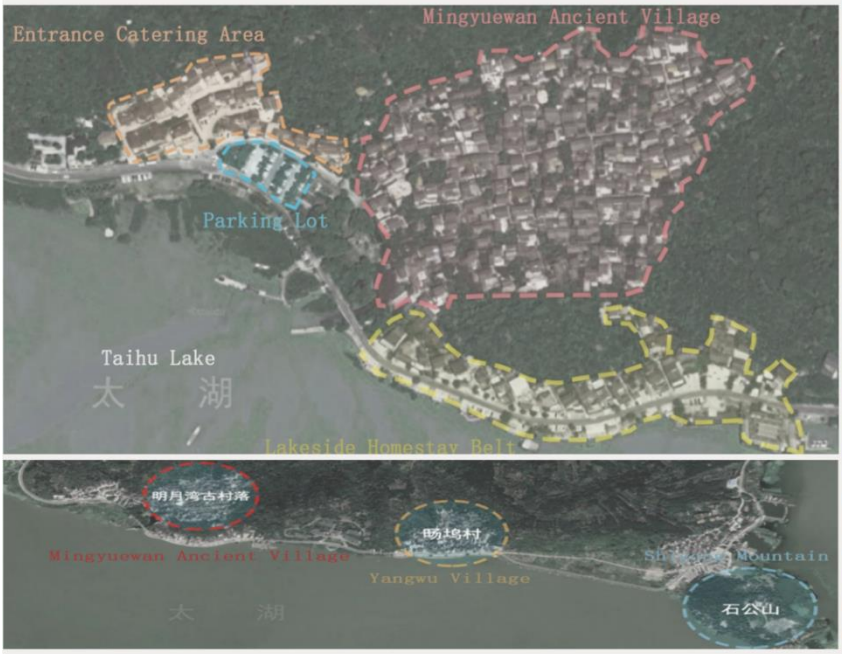
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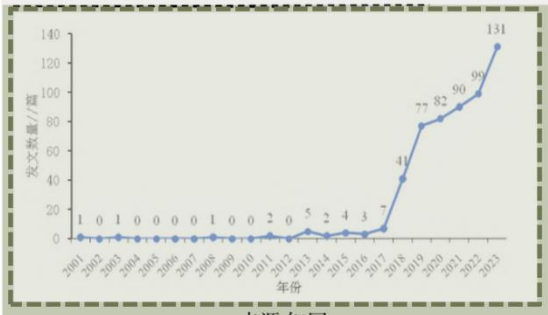
ANNEX A. (Tables and diagrams)

1 Location Analysis of Mingyuewan Ancient Village

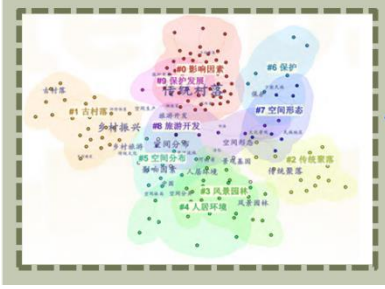


Mingyuewan Ancient Village is located at the southern tip of Xishan Island in Taihu Lake, currently belonging to Damingwan Natural Village, Jinting Town, Wuzhong District, Suzhou City. Geographically, the closest adjacent villages are Yangwu Village and Shigong Mountain. Thanks to its unique and advantageous natural environmental conditions, the overall original features of the village have been relatively well preserved. Unlike most plain-type villages in the Jiangnan region, Mingyuewan Ancient Village is surrounded by mountains on the east, north and west sides, with villagers living along the shore of Taihu Lake, presenting distinctive characteristics of a water town mountain village. The existing area of Mingyuewan Ancient Village is approximately 10 hectares, and its surrounding functional zones mainly consist of the catering area at the main entrance, the parking lot, and the homestay belt at the southern end.

Research Background Relevant theoretical research



来源 知网



Traditional Villages Publication Volume on



来源 作者自绘

Publications on Pattern Language



Research Significance

Research Significance

By deconstructing the traditional village landscape space of Mingyuewan and extracting its landscape pattern language, this study interprets the combinational logic of traditional Jiangnan culture. As a typical water-town village around Taihu Lake, Mingyuewan embodies the spatial qualities of water-dominant form, ecological sensitivity, and relatively enclosed circulation. The research helps compensate for the current emphasis on mountain and plain villages, and enriches the integrity and regional relevance of traditional village spatial theory. It also expands the application boundary of landscape pattern language by constructing a water-town adaptation branch, improving the classification of waterside vocabularies, refining waterside syntactic rules, and deepening the exploration of water-town contexts, thereby providing a methodological reference for the study of other regionally distinctive villages. More importantly, it deepens theories of cultural inheritance by establishing a dual linkage mechanism between landscape pattern language and cultural genes, upgrading heritage transmission from symbolic attachment to spatial-system embodiment, and addressing the problem of overly formalized cultural inheritance.

◯ Theoretical Significance

Practical Significance

This study deconstructs the prototype spaces of the traditional village landscape in Mingyuewan, Suzhou. By extracting landscape vocabularies from basic, composite, and complex spatial units, it builds a landscape language database that provides inspiration for the conservation-oriented innovation of traditional villages. Combined with local folk culture and everyday living practices, the study establishes a place-based system of landscape pattern language and enables a deeper interpretation of the local landscape. By identifying high-frequency, structurally clear, and culturally specific pattern vocabularies, the research accurately relates local cultural scenes to settlement structure, summarizes the key features of village spatial form, and explores directions for landscape renewal. It also offers a practical reference for the renovation and sustainable development of traditional villages in other regions.



Research Content

Research Content

Traditional villages are inhabited settlements that carry distinctive regional culture and historical memory. In the course of modernization, they have encountered many development challenges. Taking Mingyuewan Village as the research object, this study explores the relationship between landscape pattern language and village conservation and renewal on the basis of thorough field investigation and a systematic review of relevant village materials. At the same time, it synthesizes and analyzes existing theoretical achievements at home and abroad, and selects Mingyuewan Village in Suzhou—a typical traditional village of Jiangnan—as a case for conservation and planning research based on landscape pattern language.

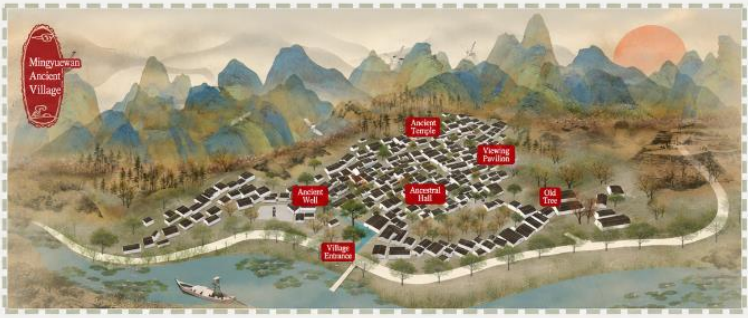
The landscape pattern language of Mingyuewan Village is first extracted through field surveying and mapping, image analysis, and literature review, identifying basic pattern units such as waterside embankments and the house–courtyard–garden structure. It then interprets the combinational logic of these units, summarizing the spatial syntax and the transitional sequence between public and private space, such as streets formed by water, lanes formed by streets, and networks formed by lanes, thereby constructing the overall pattern of mountain–water–field–village–harbor and revealing its underlying spatial wisdom. On this basis, the study evaluates the integrity of the spatial patterns, identifies points of rupture and absence, and attributes problems such as the insufficient vitality of public space to the weakening and variation of core patterns. Finally, it explores translation strategies and transforms traditional patterns through prototype restoration, type translation, and structural reorganization, proposing layered renewal and design schemes at the levels of overall pattern, public space, and architectural courtyards.



Location of Mingyuewan Ancient Village

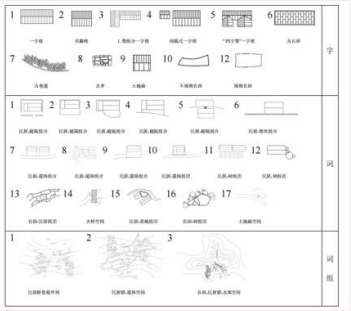
Location of Mingyuewan Ancient Village

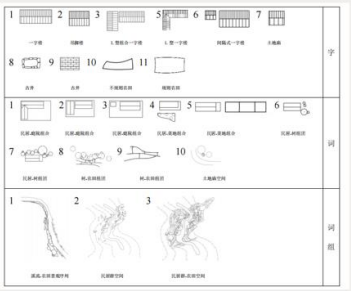




Mingyuewan Village is located at the southern end of Xishan Island on Taihu Lake, in Jinting Town, Wuzhong District, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. It faces Taihu Lake to the south and leans against Qing Mountain to the north, while hills also encircle the village from the east and west, forming a landscape pattern in which mountains and water embrace one another. The village enjoys an excellent ecological environment, abundant mountain and water resources, and a relatively intact historic setting that preserves the original charm of a Jiangnan water town. It also benefits from a favorable transportation location, with convenient road networks nearby and close links to Suzhou's urban area and other cities in the Yangtze River Delta, making it easily accessible for visitors. Mingyuewan Village has successively been recognized as a Chinese Famous Historical and Cultural Village, a Jiangsu Provincial Cultural Relics Protection Unit, and a Key Tourism Village of Suzhou, giving it notable influence in the conservation of traditional villages and the development of cultural tourism.

Introduction to the Pattern Language of Landscape





The Pattern Language of Landscape is divided into three dimensions: Context, Vocabulary, and Phrases

① **Context** is categorized into Humanistic Context and Natural Context. Rooted in the landscape of Taihu Lake and mountains, Mingyuewan Village has evolved over thousands of years, forming a natural context characterized by "backing on mountains and facing water, with harmonious integration of fields and residences". Meanwhile, its fishing and agricultural production traditions, coupled with the cultural heritage of the Wu Region, constitute the humanistic context of the landscape pattern language. The integration of natural and humanistic contexts forms the holistic background for the generation and interpretation of the landscape pattern language, serving as the foundational basis for understanding the significance of all landscape elements in the village.

② **Vocabulary Extraction** in this study is divided into Physical Space and Cultural Space. Physical space elements mainly include waterfront docks, lane corridors, courtyards under ancient camphor trees, the "house-courtyard-garden" composite unit, and all components within the holistic pattern of "mountain-water-field-village-harbor". Cultural space elements mainly cover spaces that host folk activities of the Wu Region, and facilities that reflect the traditional fishing-farming production mode.

③ **Spatial Generation Logic of Phrases**:

- **Spatial Expansion Grammar**: "Forming streets along water → forming alleys from streets → forming networks from alleys". This pattern combination embodies the generative "grammar" of the village's spatial expansion along the water system.
- **Spatial Transition Sequence**: "Public space → semi-public & semi-private space → private space", which demonstrates the combination and transition of spaces with different privacy levels.
- **Functional Composite Combination**: "Waterfront dock + lane corridor + house-courtyard-garden", which reflects the pattern combination and linkage of production, transportation and living functions.







