Preliminary Exploration of Entrance Space Design in Traditional Villages in Zengcheng District

Yang Fu, Shuping Lin

School of Media and Art Design, Guangzhou Huali College, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, 511325, China

`1120304378@qq.com`

Abstract. The village entrance space is the carrier for people to perceive the village culture. Traditional villages in Zengcheng region have their unique cultural heritage and humanistic characteristics. This paper conducts field investigations on the village entrance space of traditional villages in Zengcheng region, analyzes the current situation and features of their landscape, and proposes corresponding renovation strategies based on design principles, exploring how to enrich the village entrance space of traditional villages in Zengcheng region.

Keywords: Village entrance space; rural landscape; transformation strategies

1   Research Background and Significance

Traditional villages in China, originally called ancient villages. In September 2012, the first meeting of the Expert Committee on the Protection and Development of Traditional Villages decided to change the commonly used term from "ancient villages" to "traditional villages". Traditional villages are the results of agricultural civilization and the most precious heritage of agricultural civilization. As of October 25, 2023, there are a total of 8,155 Chinese traditional villages nationwide. Traditional villages not only contain rich historical information but also numerous cultural landscapes. However, urban expansion and industrial development have both promoted the development of traditional villages and posed significant challenges to their ecological environment and rural landscapes. The protection and transformation of traditional village landscapes are urgent.

The village entrance, known as the village gateway. The village entrance space is mainly divided into two parts. One part is the external environment, including mountains, rivers, fields, etc. The other part is the internal environment, including traditional houses, streets, lanes, archways, cultural artworks, etc. The external environment and the internal environment together form the entrance landscape of the traditional village. As the first page of the village space, the village entrance space serves as a connection and transition between the internal and external spaces of the village, and it is also the

construction of the village entrance is an important part of rural development, and its design is closely related to the overall image of the village.

2   The functionality of village entrances

Separation and identification function. The village entrance serves as a transitional space between the village and the outside world. It divides the traditional village landscape from the natural landscape, while also allowing them to permeate each other. Starting from the village entrance, one gradually enters the rural settlement. The presence of iconic landscape elements, such as archways, ancient trees, or cultural artifacts, helps to visually distinguish the village entrance and create a rich and distinct village image.

Traffic organization function. The village entrance is the boundary space between the village and the outside world, and it is also the transportation hub for external connections. It connects the roads and transportation inside and outside the village through the entrance space. At the same time, the traffic network is formed from the entrance to organize pedestrian and vehicular flow, satisfying the transportation needs. In traditional villages, the village entrance roads are usually paved with slate or cobblestones, which are very rustic.

Leisure and gathering function. The village entrance space is generally large and open, providing good physical conditions for villagers' gatherings and leisure activities. Some villages have set up pavilions and corridors in the entrance space, incorporating elements such as water bodies and green spaces for leisurely sightseeing, providing a good space for leisure and gathering for villagers and visitors to the village.

Cultural display function.Traditional villages have developed their own unique cultural characteristics through historical changes, and the village entrance space can serve as a showcase for the village's cultural features, displaying its unique historical and cultural style to people. Iconic buildings and display boards can serve as carriers for promoting the distinctive cultural heritage of the village.

3   Zengcheng Traditional Village Current Situation

3.1   Pit Bay Village

Pit Bay Village is located in Zhongxin Town, Zengcheng District, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province. The entrance of Kengbei Village is connected to the fire pond, which has a similar area to the village. The pond connects the entrance with the internal landscape, forming a landscape sequence of "pond - wall - sun-drying field - ancestral hall - village houses - watchtowers - woods". Along the way, one can enjoy the water landscape with scattered lotus flowers and a wide field of vision. Unlike the entrances of other villages, the first building at the entrance of Kengbei Village is a large study room, reflecting the villagers' emphasis on education. In the central space of the entrance, there is a well-preserved ancient banyan tree, under which the elderly in the village often chat and hold meetings. For the villagers of Kengbei Village, this ancient

banyan tree not only provides shade, but also holds their childhood memories and nostalgia for their hometown. In addition, there is a well-carved stone flagpole and delicate wooden plaques at the entrance. Kengbei Village is a well-preserved traditional village, and if it can be restored, it will be a sacred place to experience the traditional life of Lingnan fishermen, woodcutters, farmers, and scholars.

3.2   Lotus Pond Village

Lotus Pond Village is a village under the jurisdiction of Zhongxin Town, Zengcheng City, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. It has an area of 4.5 square kilometers and a cultivated land area of over 6000 acres. It has a history of more than 870 years. Lotus Village got its name because there was a lotus pond to the east when it was founded, which was full of lotus flowers and had beautiful scenery. Today, the lotus pond is still there, but the plants in the pond are no longer visible. The lotus pond at the entrance of the village has turned into a stagnant water surface connected to the paved road, and a symbolic archway has been placed at the entrance of the village, complementing the lotus pond and the pavement. There are few spatial facilities at the entrance of the village, and the traffic extends directly from the entrance to the interior of the village. The wayfinding system is embedded in the wall at the entrance, creating an open and spacious gathering space.

3.3   Gualing Village

Gualing Village is located in the eastern part of Xintang Town, Zengcheng District, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province. At the entrance of Gualing Village, there are entrance signs and a traffic guidance system. Nearby, there is a tourist service center connected to a pond. Along the pond, there are ancient trees with steps, providing a place for villagers to relax and enjoy the coolness. There is a small piece of land for sacrificial purposes at the entrance, but other than that, the entrance space of Gualing Village is relatively plain.

Based on the Pit Bay Village, Lotus Pond Village and Gualing Village as a basis, the author subsequently conducted research on other traditional villages in Zengcheng area. During the research process, it was found that there are some common characteristics in the traditional villages and entrance spaces in the Zengcheng area. These include a good natural environment with mountains and rivers, village layouts relying on roads and alleys, a combination of curves and straight lines, entrance spaces integrated with the internal village area, and the presence of iconic structures such as ancestral halls, archways, and small landscape features. The architectural structures retain the distinctive Lingnan style and bear witness to historical and cultural changes. The natural environment elements formed by the combination of mountains and farmland at the village entrance are integrated and interconnected with the surrounding space.

4   Existential questions

It is not difficult to find through research that there are certain limitations in the landscape design of the entrances of traditional villages in Zengcheng area.

The design of the entrance landscape is relatively monotonous, and the landscape sequence is not rich enough. Currently, the landscape design of the entrance space in traditional villages in Zengcheng area mainly relies on archways, solitary trees, simple tables and chairs, etc. Other landscape elements are used less and in a more traditional way, lacking in landscape aesthetics, and the spatial design form is relatively single.

The entrance space is too open and the recreational facilities are not well-equipped.

Except for a few traditional village entrances that are relatively vague, the boundaries of most traditional village entrances are obvious. However, only a small number of tables and chairs are set up in the entrance space, or tree pits are set around the solitary trees. There are few places for villagers to rest, and most of the spaces lack facilities, which is not convenient for leisure gatherings when there are many villagers.

The signage system at the entrance is outdated and inconvenient to view. Traditional villages in Zengcheng area have a long history and have undergone changes over time. With the signage system in the entrance space, there are more or less traces of the years. Some fonts are blurry and the signs are mottled, lacking clarity. The village space and landscape directions are not clear enough. Some signage systems are outdated, lacking in design sense, and do not give a good impression.

The parking area at the entrance is somewhat chaotic, making it inconvenient for tourist to stay. Traditional villages in Zengcheng area are all traces of historical changes and cultural development, and each traditional village has good tourism potential. Under the implementation of the rural revitalization policy, there are a continuous stream of visitors and experts visiting from various places, and chaotic parking spaces can cause inconvenience and significant impact on traffic, greatly reducing the tourism experience.

The greenery of the entrance space lacks richness and has ordinary ornamental value. Most of the greenery in the entrance space of traditional villages in Zengcheng area relies on solitary trees or ancient trees to form the green landscape. Shrubs are mainly evergreen plants used as the green foundation, lacking ground cover plants. As a result, the high-level and middle-level plant landscape in the entire entrance space is monotonous, lacking medium-high, medium-low, and low-level plants. There are mostly evergreen plants with almost no deciduous plants, making the ornamental value insufficient.

The uniqueness of the entrance space is lacking, and homogeneity is serious. Currently, the design methods and use elements of the entrance spaces in Zengcheng area are quite similar. The landscape homogeneity of each entrance space is serious, lacking unique cultural characteristics of each village, which is not conducive to the cultural inheritance and development of traditional villages.

5   Village Entrance Space Renovation Strategy.

The elements of landscape should be integrated to create a complete landscape space. In response to the problem of a single landscape element and insufficient richness in the entrance space of traditional villages in Zengcheng, multiple landscape elements can be combined. The use of iconic scenery such as archways can be used for spatial introduction, combined with structures and architectural elements that are coordinated in style, forming a unified hard spatial area. Solitary trees can serve as focal points and be accompanied by flowering plants or landscape water features. By combining multiple landscape elements, enclosed spaces, semi-enclosed spaces, and open spaces can be formed to create spatial contrasts and enhance the aesthetics of the entrance space.

Clarify spatial divisions, increase recreational facilities, and create a combination of dynamic and static spatial forms. The entrance space of most traditional villages in Zengcheng is relatively open and underutilized. During the design process, spatial terrain changes can be added to enhance spatial interest. At the same time, adding recreational facilities to the entrance space allows it to accommodate more villagers and visitors for leisure and gathering activities. The road pavement can also be made of different materials and styles to create variations in hard paving and separate spaces, taking into account the activities of villagers and visitors. If necessary, traffic separation measures and guided routes can be implemented to avoid mutual interference.

Incorporate traditional village cultural elements into signage system redesign. The signage system at the entrance serves as one of the hard landscape elements and can be redesigned. During the design process, local cultural elements from various traditional villages in Zengcheng can be extracted and applied to the signage system design. Changes in the appearance of the signage system can be made, and different forms of cultural symbols can be used for redesign. Near the signage system, installations such as flower ponds, flower walls, and artistic pieces can be arranged to enrich the spatial landscape.

Plan parking areas and consider traffic separation if necessary. Along the roads leading to traditional villages in Zengcheng, cars and electric bikes are often parked, causing significant impact on the passage space. When designing the entrance space, this factor should be considered, and if necessary, traffic separation measures can be implemented. Proper parking spaces and pedestrian areas can be planned to guide the movement of vehicles and pedestrians separately, reducing the impact of vehicle traffic and parking on the village space. The need for non-motorized vehicle parking areas and shade in parking spaces should also be considered.

Enrich the green landscape design of the entrance space and enhance the scenic quality of the plant landscape. The plant hierarchy in the entrance space of traditional villages in Zengcheng is relatively thin and sparse, lacking a rich plant community. In the redesign of the entrance space, a variety of plants should be added. While preserving solitary and ancient trees, tall plants can be chosen to enrich the upper layer of the plant landscape. Deciduous and evergreen small trees can be selected to create the middle-upper layer. Flowering shrubs can be added to the existing bushes to enrich the middle layer. Ground cover plants should be increased to improve the middle-lower and lower layers of the plant landscape. Consider the proportion of evergreen and deciduous

plants, the color combinations of flowering and foliage plants, and the selection of plants with different viewing characteristics to create a diverse and aesthetically pleasing plant configuration in the entire entrance space.

Utilize traditional culture and local elements to create regional characteristics. The design of the entrance space in traditional villages in Zengcheng tends to be homogeneous. During the design process, it is important to consider the use of local materials for hard landscape design and the use of local tree species for plant configuration. Combined with the culture and architectural features of each traditional village, the unique characteristics of each village can be amplified using the Cantonese culture, creating distinctive entrance spaces based on local conditions.

6   Conclusion

The village entrance space carries the sense of belonging for the villagers, the homesickness of the travelers, the rural culture, and the humanistic feelings. Good design of the village entrance space plays a positive role in rural development. Under the policy context of rural revitalization, how to inherit traditions, promote innovation, and reflect a good rural style is a direction that designers urgently need to consider.

Acknowledgment

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