

Optimization Strategies for Red Cultural Tourism Landscape in Landscape Architecture: A Case Study of Qujiawan

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Abstract Under the impetus of policies for the integration of culture and tourism during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, the annual number of visitors to red tourism in China has exceeded 1.5 billion. Qujiawan is the core area of Xiang'e'xi Revolutionary Base, and its red tourism resources are integrated with Chu culture and Three Kingdoms culture deeply. Through on-site research and policy analysis, core issues such as insufficient activation of revolutionary sites and weak narrative nature in red cultural tourism landscape in Qujiawan were discussed, and then five optimization strategies (re-enacting historical scenes, synergistic development of ecology and culture, upgrading the digital empowerment of experience, integrated development of diverse business forms, and community co-construction and sharing) were proposed to provide practical references for the creation and sustainable development of red landscape in Qujiawan and ideas for the optimization and upgrading of similar red cultural tourism landscape.

Keywords Red culture, Tourism landscape, Landscape architecture, Qujiawan, Revolutionary sites, Landscape narrative

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In 2023, the *Implementation Opinions on Promoting High-Quality Development of Red Tourism* issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism clearly set the goal of deepening the development of red tourism, namely passing on the red genes, carrying forward the revolutionary spirit, and deeply exploring the connotations of red culture. In the *Outline of National Red Tourism Development Plans (2016–2020)*, “red and green integration” is even designated as the core strategy, promoting the coordinated development of ecological resources and red culture in revolutionary old areas to facilitate rural revitalization^[1].

The traditional planning of red landscape mostly focuses on the protection of cultural relics themselves, lacking spatial narrative design and professional technical intervention in the field of landscape architecture^[2]. In recent years, the theory of “cultural adaptability design” proposed by the academic community has provided theoretical support for the organic integration of regional cultural elements and modern landscape functions. Qujiawan has 39 revolutionary sites, and a unique spatial carrier is formed based on the ecological foundation with a dense network of waterways. It is urgently necessary to achieve the dual values of revolutionary spirit inheritance and ecological service functions through professional design in landscape architecture.

At present, China's red tourism development faces three prominent contradictions: homogenization of cultural expression, marginalization of ecological protection, and weak community participation. Data shows that 83% of red scenic spots relies solely on symbols such as

monuments and sculptures to convey their culture, so that tourists' cultural perception is shallow. The area of Honghu Wetland decreased by 9.2 km² from 2018 to 2023, and tourism development exacerbated the fragmentation of the ecology of waters. Among the 39,000 permanent residents in Qujiawan Town, only 12% of permanent residents participate in tourism services, and the vitality of local culture and residents' participation have not been fully unleashed^[3–4]. In this paper, based on the on-site investigation of the current status of red tourism resources in Qujiawan, the core issues in landscape construction were summarized, and targeted optimization strategies were proposed to provide practical references for the research on the in-depth integration of red culture and rural tourism.

1 Current situation and historical evolution of Qujiawan Town

Qujiawan Town is located in the west of Honghu Lake in Jingzhou City, Hubei Province. It is characterized by a network of waterways and convenient transportation. It is a famous red town and the birthplace of the classic red work *Honghu Red Guards*. The capital of Xiang'e'xi Revolutionary Base was situated on the century-old street of this town. The old street has been listed as a national key cultural relic protection unit, where there are a large number of revolutionary sites and relics.

The spatial layout of Qujiawan Town gradually took shape over the course of history. Its development history can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty. Before the Ming Dynasty,

this area was still an uninhabited island. In the Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty, Qu Wenxian came here to collect firewood and discovered that the local resources were abundant, so he settled and reproduced here, becoming the pioneer of Qujiawan. In the Chongzhen period of the Ming Dynasty, this area was named “Dachongwan” due to the living trajectory of the Qu family. In the 40th year of the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty, the population of the Qu family accounted for 80% of the local population, and “Dachongwan” was officially renamed “Qujiawan”^[5].

After the 40th year of the Qianlong reign, Qujiawan gradually took shape as a small town in its commercial development. In 1873, the “Shuangmao” store was opened, and its scale continued to expand in 1920. In 1930, it even established a trading office in Shashi. Since modern times, Qujiawan has become the core base of Xiang'e'xi Revolutionary Base. From 1926 to 1927, the Communist Party sent Peng Guocai to Qujiawan to carry out revolutionary work, laying the ideological foundation for the establishment of revolutionary organizations for the masses. In 1928, He Long and others led the masses to carry out revolutionary struggles here. From 1931 to 1932, the Red Sixth Army established Xiang'e'xi Revolutionary Base in Qujiawan, creating a profound red revolutionary heritage^[6].

This land not only gave birth to countless revolutionary martyrs who dedicated themselves to national independence and national liberation, but also nourished numerous red literary works. In the 1950s, the creative team went deep into

Qujiawan for research, explored revolutionary stories, collected creative materials, and created the classic opera *Honghu Red Guards*. The classic melody of “Honghu Water, Waves Rolling” in the opera has been sung and passed down to this day, and has become a red memory in the hearts of several generations, also making the red stories of Qujiawan widely spread^[7].

2 Analysis of material remains in Qujiawan

The old street of Qujiawan was built in the ninth year of Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty (1496), with a history of over 500 years. The total area of traditional buildings is 18,000 m², and the integrity rate of buildings is as high as 95%. The original length of the old street was over 700 m, and its width was approximately 2.5 m. Currently, the intact section is about 400 m long. The buildings along the street are mostly residences from the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, with a purlin-timber structure. They feature single-eave hard roof, gray walls and black tiles, and high gable and ridge. The decorative craftsmanship is exquisite, not only reflecting the regional characteristics of the water town in Jiangnan Plain, but also integrating the architectural styles of the Ming and Qing styles and the traditional residences of the Jiangnan region. The wood carvings inside and outside the buildings are of great historical and artistic value.

The overall spatial layout of Qujiawan is divided into two major sections: the northern commercial street and the southern red scenic area of Thunder Shock in the Lake Town. The northern commercial street is composed of revolutionary sites and commercial shops arranged alternately, where the red history and the atmosphere of the market town are integrated. The southern scenic area is centered around the red sites, focusing on the commemoration and display of revolutionary history.

2.1 Analysis of architectural remains

The red architectural remains in Qujiawan have a unique spatial layout. They are mostly centered around courtyards and extend along the longitudinal axis, forming a narrow and elongated space pattern. Based on the differences in outdoor space scales of buildings, academics have classified these buildings into three types: courtyard-style, patio-style, and attic-style buildings. All three types of buildings were given important functions during the revolutionary period, and their spatial characteristics were highly compatible with the revolutionary needs.

2.1.1 Courtyard-style buildings. The outdoor

space scale of courtyard-style buildings is the largest. It is generally formed by three sides of the base and one side of the building, and it an economical and practical courtyard layout. The old site of the Communist Party of Xiang'e'xi Provincial Committee is a typical example. This building was originally the old residence of local businessman Qiu Shengbao, with a width of 28 m and a length of 32 m (Fig.1). Its clear spatial sequence and independent and spacious courtyard not only met the need for quiet office work of the revolutionary agency but also provided suitable spaces for secret meetings and reception work, so it became an important office location during the revolutionary period.

2.1.2 Patio-style buildings. The outdoor space scale of patio-style buildings is second, and they have distinct regional characteristics in the Jiangnan Plain. The Qu Family Ancestral Hall is the core representative (Fig.2). This building was originally the ancestral hall of the Qu family. It is 32 m in length and 21 m in width, and has a three-story structure with two wings made of Chinese bricks and tiles. During the revolutionary period, it successively served as the office location for important institutions such as the Xiang'e'xi Soviet Government. Its strict axis and terraced layout are suitable for the organizational characteristics of the revolutionary government departments with clear division of labor and close connections. The design of multiple patios also meets the functional requirement of different departments to have separate offices without interfering with each other.

2.1.3 Attic-style buildings. There is almost no independent outdoor space. Attics form a semi-interior space, and is a typical layout of street shops in the Jiangnan Plain. It not only embodies the traditional Chinese family culture but also adapts to the needs of local natural environment and commercial operation. Chunyixing is a representative of this type of buildings (Fig.3). The building has a narrow facade and a large depth. The design of attics compensates for the insufficient lighting in the middle. During the Land Revolution period, many revolutionary institutions such as the Xiang'e'xi Provincial Workers' and Peasants' Federation, the Communist Youth League Xiang'e'xi Provincial Committee, and the general office of *Workers and Peasants Daily* were located here. The compact attic-style layout achieves efficient space utilization, and adapts to the publicity needs and office requirements of social organizations and mass organizations.

2.2 Analysis of plant landscape remains

The current plant landscape resources in Qujiawan are relatively scarce. They are mainly

distributed in the west of the scenic area and the areas surrounding the lake. The trees in the scenic area are mainly cypress trees, and the herbaceous plants are mainly dog-tooth grass. The variety of shrubs is scarce, and a rich and visually appealing plant landscape system has not been formed (Fig.4). At the same time, the overall plant species are relatively monotonous, and there is a problem of exposed surface vegetation in some areas. The configuration of ornamental plants is seriously insufficient. Although there is already a certain greening foundation in the area, there is still considerable room for improvement in the overall creation effect of plant landscape. It is urgent to optimize the plant landscape style by enriching the types of plants and strengthening meticulous maintenance management.

3 Optimization strategies for red cultural tourism landscape in Qujiawan

Based on the current problems and regional characteristics of red cultural tourism landscape in Qujiawan, as well as the theories of landscape architecture, five optimization strategies were proposed from aspects of historical inheritance, ecological protection, technological empowerment, business model integration, and community participation, so as to promote the transformation of red landscape from “static display” to “living inheritance”.

3.1 Re-enacting historical scenes to awaken red memories

Based on the core principles of “restoring as it was, minimal intervention, and maximum preservation”, the protective restoration of revolutionary sites are carried out, and historical scenes are recreated to pass down red memories through concrete spatial scenes. On the one hand, key red scenes such as the Red Guards' Wharf and the Soviet Congress Hall are restored. The Red Guards' Wharf strictly follows the historical form to restore the mortise and tenon structure and anti-slip paving of the wooden bridge, and the worn texture of the stone steps is recreated to reproduce the revolutionary scene of “Honghu people rowing ships to go to war”. Soviet Congress Hall focuses on the repair of the building itself, such as reinforcing the wooden framework of the beams and columns, repairing the weathered traces of blue bricks, and restoring the original color of the beams and columns through traditional oil painting techniques to allow architectural details to carry red history. 62% of the damaged buildings in the old street are repaired, and their historical features and regional characteristics of Jiangnan

Plain are maximally preserved.

On the other hand, the deep integration of red culture and tourism experience are promoted to create immersive red experience scenarios. An immersive live-action performance of “Honghu Red Guards” is developed to use modern artistic means to re-enact the heroic struggle stories of the Red Guards. In the waterfront area, a guerrilla warfare live-action theater is created to create a realistic revolutionary battle scene through the combination of sound, light, and electricity as well as the integration of live performances and water special effects, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in the arduous journey and striving passion of the revolutionary era.

3.2 Synergistic development of ecology and culture for achieving red and green integration

Based on the current situation of low green coverage rate in Qujiawan, fragmented lake shore vegetation belts, and threatened ecological conditions of Honghu Wetland, as well as the principle of “ecological priority and cultural empowerment”, the coordinated development of ecological protection and the inheritance of red culture is promoted to implement the development strategy of “red and green integration”.

Firstly, an ecological protection system for Honghu Wetland is established. It is needed to delineate the scope of the core protection area of Honghu Wetland, build an ecological buffer

zone, and strictly prohibit destructive activities such as development, fishing, and pollution within the core area to protect the original ecosystem of the wetland. Ecological projects such as returning ponds to lakes, dredging and sediment removal, etc. are implemented to gradually restore the historical reed marsh ecological landscape and enhance the self-purification and regulation functions of the lake and the protection capacity of biodiversity.

Secondly, the creation of plant landscape in the scenic area is optimized. Based on the principle of “ecological priority and local plants as the mainstay”, the proportion of local native tree species in Honghu is enhanced to over 75%. Meanwhile, it is necessary to scientifically plan the plant planting system, choose tolerant-to-wetland species such as cypress, water fir, and willow that are suitable for the climate and soil conditions of Jiangnan Plain, and adopt native deciduous tree species (such as mulberry, maple, and ash) as well as native flowering shrubs (such as gardenia, *Serissa japonica*, and wild rose) to construct a richly layered and seasonally distinct native plant landscape. It is needed to strictly avoid invasive alien species to ensure the stability and local nature of ecosystem, so that the plant landscape not only performs ecological functions but also becomes the natural carrier of regional culture and red culture.

3.3 Upgrading the digital empowerment of experience and innovating red dissemination

It is needed to introduce modern digital technologies to break the time and space limitations of red cultural dissemination, achieve an upgrade in red landscape experience and permanent protection of red resources, and promote the transition of red culture from “display in museums” to “shared by the public”.

On the one hand, intelligent tour experiences are created. The AR intelligent guide system is introduced, and tourists simultaneously overlay and restore the historical original scenes such as the Soviet Congress in 1931 on their mobile phones or AR devices by scanning the code. They can immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the revolutionary meeting hall and key historical moments to enhance the interactivity and experience of the tour.

On the other hand, a red digital resource system is built. It is necessary to create the digital museum of “Honghu Red Memory”, construct an online revolutionary cultural relic database, comprehensively integrate revolutionary relics, documents, archives, historical images, etc., and realize the systematic sorting and permanent preservation of red resources in high-definition



Fig.1 Former residence of merchant Qu Shengbao (courtyard-style building)



Fig.2 Qu Family Ancestral Hall (patio-style building)



Fig.3 Chunyixing (attic-style building)



Fig.4 Plant landscape

digital form, and solve the problem of loss in traditional cultural protection. Relying on the digital database, time and space limitations are broken to allow the public to access, view, and learn red resources online anytime and anywhere, provide rich materials for school ideological and political education, social red propaganda, and personal historical learning, and help the red spirit to be widely disseminated and passed down from generation to generation in the new era.

3.4 Integrated development of diverse business forms for enriching cultural and tourism experiences

It is needed to deeply implement the “red +” development concept, integrate education, ecology, leisure and other diversified business forms, create a multi-level and composite red cultural tourism experience system, and enhance the attractiveness and influence of red tourism.

In the aspect of “red+education”, a distinctive red education system should be established. Red-themed training courses for Party members and cadres and revolutionary history study programs for primary and secondary school students are expanded, and interactive educational contents such as immersive scenario party lessons, military expansion, and historical script reasoning are developed. It is necessary to establish a linkage mechanism with national red education bases, jointly build and share teaching resources and visiting routes, enhance the coverage and influence of red education, and make Qiujiawan become a red education site integrating learning, experience and practice.

In the aspect of “red+ecology”, a red-green integrated ecological study route is created. Relying on the natural wetland landscape of Honghu, the ecological study route of “crossing reed swamp” is developed. Tourists ride ancient-style fishing boats through reeds, listen to the guide tell the revolutionary story of the Honghu Red Guards using the wetland terrain to carry out guerrilla warfare, and observe rare animals and plants in the wetland, thereby achieving the deep integration of red cultural learning and ecological experience. Based on Jinwan Flower Sea, a four-season landscape system is created to realize seasonal landscape experiences such as spring viewing of rape flowers, summer viewing of lotus, autumn viewing of sunflowers, and winter viewing of reed snow, allow tourists to feel the profound essence of red culture in the beauty of nature, and promote mutual promotion and win-win situation of ecological protection and red inheritance.

3.5 Community co-construction and sharing for activating local vitality

Community residents are as the core

participants in the inheritance of red culture, and a “deep participation mechanism for residents” is established to promote the sharing of the development achievements of red tourism among the entire population, and make local forces become the internal driving force for the sustainable development of red landscape in Qujiawan.

At first, the participation of local residents in the development of red tourism is prioritized. Original residents of the old street are recruited to serve as red tour guides, actors in live performances, and inheritors of red culture. Through systematic and professional training, residents can return to their familiar spaces to find employment. This not only enhances the authenticity and appeal of the red narrative from a local perspective, but also effectively improves residents’ economic income and sense of regional belonging.

Secondly, the development of local characteristic industries is supported. A characteristic catering area centered on “Honghu Lotus Soup” is built, and local culinary culture is explored. Based on local products such as lotus roots, fish and rice in Honghu, red-themed cultural products such as “Red Guards’ Food” and “Fish and Rice for Military Support Boxes” are developed to promote the transformation of agricultural resources into cultural experience resources. It is needed to construct a local characteristic industrial chain that integrates flavor experience, hands-on practice, and cultural consumption, achieve the coordinated development of red brand building and rural revitalization, allow residents to gain tangible benefits in the development of red tourism, and stimulate their enthusiasm and initiative for participation.

4 Conclusion

Since the “14th Five-Year Plan”, the development of red tourism has received high attention and policy support at the national level. The inheritance of revolutionary spirit is no longer limited to static displays in venues, but is developing towards a diversified and dynamic direction. In this paper, the core area of the Xiang’e’xi Revolutionary Base in Qujiawan was studied. The current situation and problems of red tourism cultural landscape were analyzed from the two dimensions of historical evolution and material remains. Based on the theoretical framework of landscape architecture discipline as well as regional red culture and ecological characteristics, five optimization strategies (re-enacting historical scenes, synergistic development of ecology and culture, upgrading the digital empowerment of

experience, integrated development of diverse business forms, and community co-construction and sharing) were proposed to promote the realization of multiple goals such as the inheritance of revolutionary spirit, protection of ecological functions, upgrading of tourism experience, and community development empowerment for the red landscape in Qujiawan, and form a new model of rural revitalization led by red tourism.

The optimization practice of Qujiawan provides practical references for the creation of red tourism cultural landscape. In the subsequent planning and construction of red landscape, it is necessary to further strengthen the intervention of landscape architecture discipline, deeply integrate regional red culture and ecological characteristics, take into account protection and development, inheritance and innovation, make red landscape become an important carrier for the inheritance of red genes, promote high-quality and sustainable development of red tourism, and inject continuous red power into rural revitalization.

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