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Survey on Farming Culture of Ancient Villages and Tourism Development: A Case Study of Hongjiang City in Hunan Province

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Abstract The origin of human civilization is based on agriculture and settlement, and the ancient villages preserved up to now can be rated as "museum and historical library of rural lifestyle and rural culture", which are of important historical and cultural value. Through the field survey of farming culture resources of ancient villages in Hongjiang City of Hunan Province, this article classifies and evaluates the farming culture and ancient village resources, and sets forth the following recommendations for the development of ancient village tourism: strengthening the product differentiation development; focusing on the cultivation and integration of resources; enhancing the village environmental remediation.

Key words Ancient village, Farming culture, Tourism development, Hongjiang City

No doubt the origin of human civilization is based on agriculture, and agricultural production is a prerequisite for civilization generation. In the long process of agricultural production, our ancestors created a splendid farming culture. The farming culture not only created a splendid Chinese history, but built indomitable spirit and laborious characters of the Chinese people. Even nowadays, farming culture still permeates our lives, especially all aspects of village life.

Although the ancient villages scattered all around China, the original form of human gathering, production, living and reproduction, have experienced various vicissitudes of life, they epitomize the long history of Chinese farming culture, and can be rated as "museum and historical library of rural lifestyle and rural culture"^[1], of extremely important conservation value.

In the transformation of traditional agriculture to modern agriculture nowadays, exploring the connotation and contemporary value of farming culture not only has very far-reaching historical significance, but also offers the support for the ancient village tourism.

The Hunan and Guizhou region is one of China's seven ancient community gathering areas. It was the important hub and the only road for trade historically, leaving too many ancient villages in the course of history and reserving intact rich farming culture carriers.

On the basis of field surveys, this article carries out the systematic research of the ancient village farming culture in Hongjiang City as the core area of western Hunan. From the perspective of tourism development, it makes preliminary study of the resource utilization of ancient villages as the main carrier of the farming culture, to accelerate the development of tourism industry.

1 Definition and connotation of farming culture

1.1 Definition As for the cognition and understanding of farming culture, there have been many scholars defining it from different perspectives.

Hu Guangwei^[2] interprets farming culture as rural areas and agriculture from the literal meaning.

Zhao Zhili^[3] believes that farming culture refers to a kind of traditional culture formed in the long-term agricultural society by the farmers, with agriculture, farmers and rural areas as the main body, integrating the forms of historical culture, national culture, religious culture and folk culture, and forming its own unique cultural content and features.

Huang Bihua^[4] maintains that farming culture is the general term of material culture and spiritual culture created by mankind in the process of agricultural production practices.

After comparing the existing definitions of farming culture, it is not difficult to see that although the academic world's definition of farming culture is not exactly the same, the basic understanding of its essence is consistent, that is, they all reach a consensus on the definition that farming culture is the general term of material and spiritual culture created by farming, associated with the agricultural society.

1.2 Connotation The farming culture is a major part of traditional Chinese culture, and also an important spiritual and cultural resource for building the core values of the Chinese nation, so exploring the connotation of farming culture is of important practical significance to promoting tourism development and new socialist countryside construction.

Peng Jinshan^[5] generalizes the connotation of farming culture as "seasonal, appropriate, regular and harmonious", actually including farming and related activities, folk beliefs, superstructure and ethics, ideas, rituals, and many other aspects.

Xue Rong *et al.*^[6] think that the connotation of farming culture is the general term of material culture and non-material culture related to agriculture, manifested in the form of agricultural

science and technology, agricultural thinking, agricultural systems and laws, food culture, farming implements, crop remains, farmland ruins, hydraulic engineering, warehousing ruins and relics, folk custom, sculptures, paintings, poetry and proverbs that reflect farming.

Chen Lijun *et al.*^[7] maintains that the farming culture in a broad sense is the general term of production and social relations between people in the agricultural society, not only including laws, regulations and a variety of rules, but also including social customs, habits and values; the farming culture in a narrow sense is equivalent to smallholder culture, mainly including people's ideology, cultural traditions, customs and values in the agricultural society.

From the development history of human society, agricultural activities are the foundation of human existence and development, and the core connotation of farming culture is farmers' ideology and values formed in the long-term agricultural production and social life.

These values and ideologies play an important role in restricting and regulating interpersonal relationship and social climate in rural areas, and also creating various forms of folk culture.

2 Overview of the study area and survey methods

2.1 Overview of the study area Hongjiang, formerly Qianyang County, is a county-level city of Huaihua, Hunan, China. It is located in the western Hunan Province and the eastern edge of the Yunnan – Guizhou Plateau, with terrain high in the southeast and low in the northwest.

The landform is mainly the mountains, hills, valleys and plains. There are so many rivers distributed horizontally and vertically in the region. Hongjiang City is at the heart of bordering region of the Hunan, Hubei, Chongqing and Guizhou provinces and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. It is an important node in the Zhangjiajie – Guilin travelling route.

Within a radius of 400km of Hongjiang City is a world-class

highly dense ring of tourism resources, where Zhangjiajie, Langshan Mountain and other world natural heritage are distributed. There are diverse types of farming culture in this region, which include not only farming culture and customs, but also a variety of folk arts.

The farming culture here is primitive, harmonious, and ecological. It is an important spiritual and cultural resource for the building of the core value of today's society. The scope of this survey covers 8 towns, 17 townships, 316 administrative villages and 35 neighborhood committees in Hongjiang City, with a total area of approximately 2174 km².

2.2 Survey methods In October 2011, commissioned by the tourism department of Hongjiang City, we conducted a field survey of the ancient villages and farming culture carried by these villages within Hongjiang City.

During the survey, in accordance with Classification, Survey and Evaluation of Tourism Resources (GB/T18972-2003) standard^[8] issued by the National Tourism Administration, we classified the farming culture and tourism resources, and focused on mapping and photographing 20 major carriers of ancient village farming culture, such as Qianyang Ancient Town, Tuokou Ancient Town, Shuangxi Ancient Town, and Yanshang Ancient Town.

3 Analysis of results

3.1 Classification of farming culture tourism resources

The farming culture tourism resources refer to the farming culture carriers more attractive to tourists, such as terraced landscape and farming appliances.

In accordance with the *Classification, Survey and Evaluation of Tourism Resources* standard issued by the National Tourism Administration, we first divide the farming culture tourism resources into two categories: farming material culture and farming spiritual culture, and then further subdivide them into different master classes and subclasses (see Table 1).

Table 1 Classification of farming culture tourism resources

Categories	Master classes	Subclasses and objects
Farming material culture	Food crops	Food crops (rice, corn, wheat, sorghum, millet, potatoes, sweet potatoes, buckwheat, <i>etc.</i>), cash crops (bayberry, grapes, citrus, <i>etc.</i>)
	Farming tools	Plowing tools (iron hoes, iron plows), pulverizer tools (wooden rake), planting tools, cultivating tools, irrigation tools, harvesting tools (sickles, threshing machine)
	Farming costumes	Coir raincoat for keeping off the rain, bird clothes and Lusheng clothes in Dong costumes
	Farming building	Stilted building, drum tower, shelter bridge and slate room rich in the features of subtropical mountain farming culture.
	Farming landscape	Terraced fields, paddy fields, irrigation and drainage systems
Farming spiritual culture	Festivals	"April 8", "Lusheng Festival", "Miao Year", "Antiphonal Singing Festival", "Sister Festival" and "Jumping Flower Festival" of Miao Nationality, "Gan'ao Festival" of Dong Nationality, "Dragon Boat Festival" celebrated by all nationalities
	Farming etiquette	Genggou Ceremony, Kaiyangmen Ceremony, Saoyangchun Ceremony, Nuo Opera "Dongdongtui", Sheri Ceremony, Ghost Festival, Rice Flower Festival, Cangshen Festival and other customs
	Folk arts	Painting, sculpture and mosaic art, tapestry art, architecture art
	Food culture	Finger Food Culture (using fingers to shape the rice into finger-sized round pill for eating), Nuohe Culture (New Year cake, girl's dowry cake, sacrifice and offering cake, <i>etc.</i>), tea culture, acid culture (chopped hot and sour pepper, pickled pepper, pickled vegetables, salted fish, bacon, <i>etc.</i>)
	Funeral customs	The use of rice, millet and farming tools is obvious in the funeral ritual, for example, the bereaved family wish their dead close relatives to live a happy life in the underworld by "holding rice and vegetable roll" or "with coins in the mouth"

3.2 Combination types of farming culture and ancient village landscape The farming culture in the survey area shows clumped distribution with the ancient village as core, forming the combined distribution trends of farming culture and ancient village landscape. It is the most typical especially below 600m of elevation.

Here the ancient villages are broadly distributed along the contour, and the perfect combination of quaint villages and sur-

rounding terraced landscape shows strong rustic feature and mystical culture.

On the basis of field survey, according to the characteristics of farming culture resources and geographical and cultural background, the combination of ancient village and farming culture in Hongjiang City can be divided into historical and cultural type, folk custom type, and pastoral type. The main features of all types are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Combination types of farming culture and ancient village landscape

Combination types	Main villages	Resource features
Historical and cultural type	Qianyang Ancient Town, Tuokou Ancient Town, Shuangxi Ancient Town, Yanshang, Saxi, Luoweng, Gulouping, Yanli, Shuanglong	Strong regional characteristics of buildings, many public buildings, well-preserved ancient official road, commercial road and temples
Folk custom type	Wenglangxi, Huayangxi, Yuancheng	The settlements for Yao, Miao and other ethnic minorities, with simple and honest people, and original folk customs
Pastoral type	Yanxi, Chaxi, Guanxikou, Yutangxi, Panlong, Renhexi, Heliping, Dayuan, Shuiyuanshan, Xintang, Qingshu	Beautiful natural environment, paddy fields and villages distributed along the mountain body contours, forming a beautiful picture

The historical and cultural type ancient villages were mainly formed in the Ming and Qing dynasties, where the commerce was once developed, celebrities and businessmen gathered. The buildings and villages related to these celebrities become the carriers of ancient villages, such as Qianyang Ancient Town and Tuokou Ancient Town.

The folk custom type ancient villages are mainly inhabited by Yao, Miao and other ethnic minorities, and the folk customs in the villages are rich, for example, Huayangxi is called "the village with scent spreading around the capital". Various nationalities live together in Hongjiang City, forming splendid national culture, and the villages with distinct ethnic customs.

The pastoral type ancient villages fringed by mountain and waters are located in a relatively closed alpine basin, with high forest coverage and beautiful natural environment. Many places have preserved intact original terraced landscape and southern China's most primitive folk rice culture, for example, Heliping is known as "the village in the natural botanical garden", and Renhexi is known as "the natural gene pool of plant and animal"

3.3 Comprehensive evaluation of farming culture resources

The farming culture of Hongjiang City is primitive, harmonious and ecological overall, with the following prominent characteristics:

(i) The primitiveness of farming culture is prominent. Only when the farming culture as tourism resource has the primitive cultural factors, can the modern tourists' tourism motivation of pursuit of novelty, difference and beauty be met^[9].

The ancient villages in Hongjiang City are mostly in the relatively closed alpine basins, retaining complete original terraced landscape and southern China's most primitive rice culture, for example, Panlong Village in Dachong Township is called "the village on the terraced waterfalls"; Huayangxi is famous for its wild scented rice, and Huayangxi scented rice was once regarded as the tribute for the Emperor, so it is called "the village with scent spreading around the capital"^[10].

These ancient village resources basically have not been dam-

aged. Both the natural landscape and folklore have preserved the original feature, with outstanding primitiveness.

(ii) The feature of regional culture is distinctive. The ancient villages in Hongjiang City have a history ranging from 500 to 2000 years. The architectural style is unique, and most of the ancient villages retain the architectural style and street pattern in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

These ancient villages are fringed by mountains and waters, and pay attention to the construction of public buildings and drainage systems. The courtyard layout exhibited symmetrical pattern, and especially Yanshang, Saxi and Gulouping have the prominent features.

(iii) The villages are perfectly combined with the ecology. The ancient villages here are situated in the valleys and basins with beautiful ecology and high forest coverage.

The fresh air and especially the perfect combination of quaint villages and surrounding natural environment, show a strong local flavor and mysterious ancient cultural heritage. The combination of terraced landscape and ancient villages forms a natural and open rural cultural museum in a rustic style.

(iv) The villages carry rich farming folk customs. The ancient villages in Hongjiang City carry rich farming folk customs and other intangible cultural heritages, such as neck-broken dragon in Gulouping, Chashan drum in Shuanglong Village, bamboo plaiting article in Yuancheng, and stone carving in Yanshang.

The farming folk custom of neck-broken dragon is provincial intangible cultural heritage, and now it has successfully been declared as national intangible cultural heritage.

4 Recommendations

The ancient villages are regarded as the main carrier of farming culture resources, and there are some scholars having studied the tourism development of these villages.

Chen Lijun, Xia Qingli *et al.* discuss the tourism resource development model for the farming culture^[7].

Bailu and Zhang Xiaohong carry out a comparative study of

the development and operation model for the ancient village tourism^[9].

Liu Yuqing discusses the contemporary value of regional farming culture^[10].

This article mainly discusses the development measures.

4.1 Strengthening the product differentiation development

(i) With "farming culture" as the theme, it is necessary to formulate the overall plan for the farming culture tourism development of the ancient villages, in order to better protect and develop the farming culture tourism resources.

(ii) It is necessary to tap and develop the farming culture elements contained in the ancient villages; carry out the differentiation development in accordance with the location, transportation and tourism resource value of the ancient villages, to create varied tourism atmosphere, and use tourism to drive the development of agriculture, creative cultural industries, education and cultural industries, handicraft industry and commerce.

For example, Tuokou Town can rely on the cultural and natural resources along the ancient trade routes of Hunan and Guizhou, to developing sightseeing, fruit picking and other farming cultural experience tourism products in the corridor, to meet the needs of do-it-yourself travelers, free riding lovers, self-driving travelers and violent running tribe; Yanshang Village can take the display of Yinzi buildings, ancient village farmer markets, ancient drainage systems and terrace irrigation systems as the theme direction.

4.2 Focusing on the cultivation and integration of resources

The development of farming culture tourism of the ancient villages should be integrated with other tourism resources. Based on the location and traffic conditions of the ancient village resources, there are three ways of resource integration as follows:

(i) It is integrated with the city, to develop the round-the-city farm dining leisure tourism. In the ancient villages half hour drive away from the urban area, the convenient transportation can be used to develop the dining leisure rural tourism featuring farm specialty restaurants, fishing ponds, and fruit and vegetable picking. Yanshang Village and Shuangxi Village can use this method.

(ii) It is integrated with the large scenic spots, to develop the leisure tourism around the scenic spots. The large scenic spots can be relied on to offer leisure, vacation, entertainment, dining and other services to the visitors, and carry out folk performances, cultural sightseeing, dining experiences and other activities.

The ancient villages scattered in Xuefeng Mountain can use this development model, to provide catering, and leisure services for the outdoor sports enthusiasts.

(iii) It is integrated with the ecological agriculture park, to develop sightseeing experience travel. The modern agricultural demonstration garden and demonstration base can be relied on to configure the leisure facilities, and provide visiting, flower appreciation, picking, picking and other leisure activities. The ancient villages around Qiancheng Town can take this development approach.

4.3 Enhancing the village environmental remediation Yanshang, Saxi, Luoweng, Gulouping, Wenglangxi and Huayangxi can be selected as the ancient villages for preferential develop-

ment.

It is necessary to first protect the cultural and natural landscape, strengthen the supporting infrastructure and service facilities, and conduct village appearance remediation. The main remediation content is as follows:

(i) The village sanitation building. It is necessary to promote the building of sewage facilities and waste collection and transportation facilities; construct the septic tanks, and strengthen the collection and cleaning of trash, dirt and sewage; set the fixed refuse collection points to clear rubbish around the houses; remedy the abandoned ponds and open pit, and clear drainage ditches.

(ii) The recreation spot building. The historical and cultural ancient villages should set the recreational projects with distinct cultural characteristics of the village, and set performance venue.

For example, neck-broken dragon in Gulouping and Chashan drum in Shuanglong Village are the provincial intangible cultural heritage, and they should be protected in the ancient village tourism development.

(iii) Service facility building. According to the village's cultural characteristics, it is necessary to set the village gates, and set eye-catching signs at the entrances and exits.

The main tourism road should be paved with sheet rocks or pebbles, to reflect local characteristics.

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