

Study on Local Architectural Heritage Protection Based on the Concept of Ecomuseum*

Tianhang Wang

School of Historical Culture and Tourism

Xi'an University

Xi'an, China 710065

Abstract—Local architectural heritage is an important part of cultural heritage and an indispensable carrier of regional culture. It contains abundant historical information and cultural connotations. At present, the protection of local architectural heritage is still limited to traditional technology intervention of heritage itself, which is a static concept of protection, unable to meet the needs and development of protection. The concept of ecomuseum brings some enlightenment. By establishing a management organization with aborigines as the main body and building a living protection platform for architectural heritage, it is suggested to organically integrate the building itself, the natural and humanistic environment in which the building is located, the users, defenders, traditional architectural technology, production and lifestyle, and conduct corresponding exploration on relevant heritage research, management, education and development platforms and develop the protection of local architectural heritage in a sustainable and healthy direction.

Keywords—the protection of local architectural heritage; ecomuseum; static protection; living protection

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is the common precious wealth of mankind, which contains historical cognition, emotional memory, ideological identity, cultural accumulation, inheritance of techniques and so on. It is the source of power to promote social development. The 13th Five-Year Plan for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Scientific and Technological Innovation Plan of Public Cultural Services states that cultural heritage is an important measure to maintain ethnic unity, national unity, cultural self-confidence and cultural identity. Local architectural heritage is an important part of cultural heritage and an indispensable carrier of regional culture. It contains abundant historical information and cultural connotations. People are more and more aware of its function and significance, and pay attention to the current value transfer, as well as how much valuable information that can be left to future generations. However, in the context of social and economic transformation, cultural and architectural identity, the

existence of local architectural heritage has become very fragile, the traditional architectural cultural symbols and diversity are gradually lost, and the architectural landscape and environment are gradually fragmented. How to effectively protect and inherit the local architectural heritage and make "the architectural heritage displayed on the vast land alive" is undoubtedly an important issue facing the national cultural construction today. Compared with the single technology intervention, the ecomuseum has very important reference significance for the protection of local architectural heritage, but it has not been paid attention to. This paper will discuss this issue.

II. CONNOTATION OF LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

"Heritage Protection" is a hot word nowadays, but what needs to be protected and how to protect are not well known. The connotation of heritage protection itself is changing with the depth and breadth of people's understanding in the process of continuous improvement and enrichment. From Venice Charter, the Nairobi Recommendation, the Charter of Machu Picchu, the Washington Charter and the Barra Charter, it is to be seen the scope of heritage protection has gradually expanded to places of cultural importance, including places, regions, lands, landscapes, buildings or building groups, as well as elements, contents, spaces and landscapes composed. At the same time, every effort should be made to protect and utilize these places, including preservation, maintenance, restoration, reconstruction, transformation, display, protective utilization, environment, relevance, etc. From the point of view of development, the scope of heritage protection has become wider and wider, ranging from buildings and their historical environment to settlements, towns, and far-reaching "places", which has blurred the concept of boundary. At the same time, the content of heritage protection has become more and more abundant, expanding from the simple material level to the material and non-material level, and connecting with people, regional culture and other social relevance.

Combining the principles of international cultural heritage protection with the protection practice of Chinese cultural relics and monuments, China has formulated Guidelines for the Protection of Chinese Cultural Relics and Monuments, which stipulates that "protection refers to all

*Fund Project: It was a phased achievement of the National Social Science Foundation project "Archaeological Research on the Architectural Construction Technology of Sui and Tang Palace" in 2018 (Project No. 18XKG012) and the social science fund project "Protection and Utilization of Traditional Architectural Culture in Northern Piedmont of Qinling Mountains" in Xi'an (Project No. 18ZT17).

activities carried out for the preservation of cultural relics and monuments, their environment and other related elements." It adds in Case Interpretation: "Protection includes not only engineering technology intervention, but also propaganda, education, management and other activities for the preservation of cultural relics and monuments. All social forces should be mobilized to actively participate in the preservation of cultural relics and monuments and their historical environment at various levels. Establishing protection organizations, carrying out effective management, developing publicity and education, advocating protection awareness, cultivating protection forces and raising protection funds are all effective ways". This is a comprehensive interpretation of the connotation of "protection", which covers many elements such as content, scope and mode.

Based on the above-mentioned development law of heritage protection connotation, the connotation of local architectural heritage protection can be expressed as follows: the main content of local architectural heritage protection is buildings or building clusters, the natural and artificial environment in which buildings are located, the users of buildings and their living habits, traditional architectural techniques and building materials; the scope of protection can be typical building clusters, villages, or sites of cultural importance with common architectural features and landscapes; ways of protection include preliminary investigation and research, artificial technology maintenance or restoration, transformation, protective utilization and display, environmental renovation, establishment of protection organizations, publicity and education; the purpose of protection is to preserve historical information and its value truly and completely, and to promote the scientific development of heritage and region.

III. APPLICABILITY OF ECOMUSEUM CONCEPT

Based on the connotation of the local architectural heritage protection, the focus is on the diversity of culture, the authenticity of historical environment, and the multi-level of protection methods, which can be said to be a three-dimensional protection framework. However, in practice, the vast majority of them still remain at the engineering technology level, ignoring the content of the intangible level; the relationship between the protection and utilization of heritage is not properly handled; the main body of protection is mostly government departments and experts and scholars, the enthusiasm of residents to participate in or consciously protect the heritage is not enough, or exclude local residents, or even turn the heritage site into a no-man's land. Practice has proved that the long-term uninhabited state and lack of daily maintenance are very disadvantageous for the protection of traditional buildings. The occurrence of these situations is not that the protectors turn a blind eye to the protection theory, but that in the process of practice, they separate and lose each other. There is no dominant model that can accommodate many factors such as heritage itself, heritage environment, intangible level, people, community, cultural space and so on. The ecomuseum can meet this demand.

A. *The Characteristics and Functions of Ecomuseum*

At the 9th Congress of the International Museum Association in 1971, French Museum Expert George Henry Riviere and Hugues de Varine put forward the concept of "ecomuseum" when they elaborated on the reform idea of linking heritage with environment. They thought that it was "a manifestation of human beings and nature"[1]. Mr. An Laishun translated it into "生态博物馆 (Shēngtài bówùguǎn)" and it has been used up to now. Etymologically, "ecomuseum" consists of two parts, "iokos" and "museion" in Greek. "Iokos" originally refers to "place of residence", which reflects the multiple meanings of ecomuseum, including "in-situ", "living" and "in harmony with the environment". Only by experiencing living things in its natural environment and human environment can people really realize its value. This kind of invisible and living museum built in the original place of heritage is an opposite idea from traditional ex-situ preservation and static display. It is also an important characteristic of the ecomuseum which is different from the traditional museum.

The ecomuseum has the following four main functions: the first is the protection and display of heritage. Riviere pointed out that the ecomuseum is a resource conservation center that helps preserve and develop cultural relics [2]. It will protect the material and intangible cultural heritage, the natural environment, the human environment and so on in a living, overall and culturally diverse way. The second is the propaganda and education of related concepts. It pays attention to local people's active participation in construction and later operation, which is the expected achievement based on extensive and in-depth propaganda and education in the early stage. In this way, the local people can identify with and explain their own culture and become the masters of culture. The third is the study of heritage. Ecomuseum is a laboratory that provides relevant experts with information on cultural heritage, residents and environment in the study area, and cooperates with scientific research institutions [2]. Fourth, it can promote the development of community economy and improve the living standards of local people. It is not aimed at pursuing economic interests, but with the opening of museums, cultural diversity and heritage value will inevitably arouse social concern, promote the occurrence of tourism behavior, bring objective economic benefits, and increase the income of local residents. These four functions of the ecomuseum can make people and environment more harmonious, tangible and intangible more unified, and also highlight the historical value, artistic value, scientific value, cultural value and social value of cultural heritage.

B. *A Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Ecomuseum and the Protection of Local Architectural Heritage*

In the article Ecomuseum: A Definition of Evolution, Riviere elaborated on ecomuseum, including many aspects. Later, with the development of Ecomuseum Theory and the constant verification of practice, some new requirements and tasks have been derived, which enriches the concept of ecomuseum and makes it more suitable for the needs of the construction site, thus forming a huge cognitive system. Comparing these evolving understandings with the

protection of local architectural heritage, especially Charter on the Heritage of Local Architecture promulgated by the International Council of Monuments and Sites, it is not difficult to find that the concept of ecomuseum coincides with the connotation of local architectural heritage protection, mainly in the areas of regionality, integrity, cultural diversity, community participation and promotion of development. Therefore, theoretically speaking, the ecomuseum can indeed provide reference for the protection and utilization of local architectural heritage. In contrast, the protection of local architectural heritage should not take the relocation of residents and the implementation of museum-style protection in a simple sense [3]. Traditional museum is a static and fragmentary presentation mode, which cannot reflect the regional, integral and landscape characteristics of local architectural heritage, while these aspects are the advantages of ecomuseum. Ecomuseum insists on the original and living protection of heritage in its natural and cultural environment, that is, the protection of life and production mode, which is suitable for the protection and display of immovable local architectural heritage.

IV. THE REFERENCE OF ECOMUSEUM PROTECTION MODEL — LIVING PROTECTION PLATFORM

Since the concept of ecomuseum was introduced to China in 1990s, some practices have been carried out in Guizhou, Guangxi, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Zhejiang and Hunan. At the same time, the new concept has opened up new research ideas, aiming at the protection of material and intangible cultural heritage, traditional villages, large sites and so on, successively grafting with ecomuseum, trying to use the model of ecomuseum to solve related problems. However, it is not a wise way to solve problems by copying them mechanically. As a museum, there is no fixed model for ecomuseum. It is only a concept derived from the new museum theory. Every ecomuseum has a unique set of experiences and experience. Its uniqueness and value lie in "process" rather than "result" [4]. Therefore, the cultural heritage, information center, interaction and activities between residents and audience, protection and display planning, which are called the elements of the ecomuseum, cannot be combined into the so-called "standardized model", and the ecomuseum cannot provide a ready-made model for people to follow. In this way, ecomuseum is more able to provide its process and experience. For the protection of local architectural heritage, it is more crucial to draw lessons from the platform of ecomuseum, and integrate the heritage, heritage environment, skills, residents, protection and research subjects, cultural exchange and management into the overall framework, so as to truly achieve the organic protection of heritage.

"Living Protection" is the most important characteristic of ecomuseum and the most important experience it brings to the local architectural heritage. The significance of the concept of the ecomuseum in the process of the protection of the local architectural heritage is embodied in the construction of "a living heritage protection platform". At the same time, for heritage research, management, publicity and education, community development and other aspects, it can

also be derived from heritage research platform, heritage management platform, heritage education platform and heritage development platform.

A. *Living Heritage Protection Platform*

The living protection of local architectural heritage is based on the protection of the engineering technology of the building itself, including identification, protection, repair, reconstruction and transformation, which is the most important part of heritage protection and the premise of all other related links. It emphasizes the use of traditional architectural techniques and building materials, involving the non-material level. The surrounding environment of the local architectural heritage itself is considered as part of the authenticity of the heritage [5]. Therefore, the living protection should include the material cultural heritage, the intangible cultural heritage and the environment where the heritage is located. First of all, as a material architectural heritage, "living state" means that the building should present a living state, that is, the building still continues its original function, useful for the world, or residents still live in it, rather than fixing its image as a specimen in a certain state. Secondly, as a non-material level of traditional architectural techniques, "living state" is the productive protection of building techniques, so that these traditional techniques can be fully used in the daily maintenance and protection of buildings, so as to be inherited and developed. At the same time, other forms of intangible cultural heritage have been formed by traditional cognition or activities in the region. Thirdly, the "living" environment includes the natural and human environment in which the heritage resides. Most local architectural heritage itself grows in the green mountains, the banks of green water and the fields. Its building materials, volume, shape and color are harmoniously integrated with the natural environment, as if it were made by nature. This is a living state. In addition, daily production and living behavior of residents in individual buildings, courtyards outside buildings, roads and squares among buildings and folk customs and so on constitute a living human environment. In a word, it is of great significance for the local architectural heritage to be protected in a living way, which can not only highlight its own characteristics, but also give it the maximum space to play and form a three-dimensional heritage protection framework.

B. *Heritage Research Platform*

The concept of ecomuseum attaches great importance to the study of cultural heritage, that is to say, in general experience, it is necessary to establish information centers, exhibition centers and research centers. For the local architectural heritage, the existing buildings can be directly used, through the construction of building information center and digital heritage research center, to build a research platform for the local architectural heritage.

The work of the Architectural Information Center is to collect information about architectural heritage in the region, including the preservation status, management status, regional socio-economic development status, protection and

maintenance records, text files, and image files of architectural heritage such as image, video, mapping, aerial photograph, remote sensing image, traditional construction methods and so on. On the basis of information collection, a database is established to facilitate further research and utilization. The work of Digital Heritage Research Center includes two aspects: the research of architectural heritage and the protection of architectural heritage. Through the three-dimensional laser scanning technology, the three-dimensional image model of the local architectural heritage is established, and the material composition, architectural structure and spatial composition are evaluated and studied. At the same time, it can also monitor different types of diseases on the building itself, laying the foundation for the formulation of a scientific protection plan. In addition, the use of virtual reality technology to display the artistic image and overall landscape of architectural heritage in an all-round way is conducive to the profound understanding and wide dissemination of the value of architectural heritage.

C. Heritage Management Platform

Ecomuseum emphasizes the dominant position of residents, which is specified in Six Principles, the guiding document for the construction of China's Ecomuseum: "Villagers are the masters of their culture and have the right to identify with and interpret their culture. The core of ecomuseum is public participation, which should be managed democratically." [6] With residents as the main body, the purpose is to hope that the aborigines really realize the value of the original invisible things, enhance cultural identity and cultural self-confidence, actively protect and manage this cultural wealth, rather than passively accept the leadership of the government. Residents should, according to their own conditions and under the guidance of the local government and relevant experts, set up local architectural heritage protection and management institutions, so that residents can truly participate in the protection and utilization of cultural heritage activities. Residents can use real production and living conditions to face foreign visitors, narrate the life of their ancestors in buildings as masters, manage their own material and intangible heritage, rely on their own strength to develop, truly become the masters of their own culture, so that the cultural heritage has authenticity and sustainability. At the same time, it is necessary to establish the protection system of local architectural heritage. These systems cannot change the traditional way of life of residents, otherwise it will lose the significance of living protection. In addition, it is suggested to restrict some activities which are not conducive to the protection of architectural heritage on the basis of conforming to the production and lifestyle of residents themselves.

D. Heritage Education Platform

Heritage education is an important part of heritage protection. Heritage education focuses on disseminating the value of the heritage itself, the information contained in the heritage and the knowledge related to heritage protection. The Charter on Rural Architectural Heritage states: "Rural Architectural Heritage occupies an important position in

human emotion and pride, and it has been recognized as a characteristic and charming social product. It does not seem formal, but it is orderly. It is of practical value, beautiful and interesting at the same time. It was the focus of life in that era and the record of social history". However, the value of local architectural heritage is not valued by the world, and "it is threatened by the forces of economic, cultural and architectural integration in the world", which is precisely due to the lack of heritage education. The educational function of ecomuseum can promote the development of heritage education on the basis of the living heritage protection. It is embodied in the education of inhabitants and visitors in heritage sites. On the one hand, it enables residents to have a thorough understanding of the value of their environment, the buildings they live and use, and the construction techniques of buildings, so as to enhance their awareness of protection and inherit national culture. On the other hand, it enables visitors to learn more architectural knowledge, experience traditional lifestyles and think the harmonious relationship between human and environment during the visit.

E. Heritage Development Platform

Cultural heritage is the wealth left to its people by history, but it is also on the verge of extinction because they cannot meet the needs of people's production and life in modern society. For the local architectural heritage, its value is irreplaceable. The most effective way to protect the local architectural heritage is to preserve it in a living way, but the aborigines cannot be deprived of their right to pursue modern life unilaterally. Therefore, in this era of profound changes in cultural and consumption concepts, the understanding of heritage protection should give full play to the significance shown in the Bara Charter. According to the concept of ecomuseum, taking advantage of national culture, ecological culture and tourism culture, it is good to actively participate in exchanges with the outside world, improve the living standards of aborigines, and promote the overall development of regional economy and society [7]. In this way, the inhabitants of the heritage site can truly exercise the power of the owner and play the role of the owner, and the traditional culture can avoid the fate of being abandoned. The concept of heritage development is also the inevitable requirement of living heritage protection.

V. CONCLUSION

The value of local architectural heritage has been recognized by the world and began to be paid attention to, but the traditional static protection cannot well highlight the characteristics of heritage and show the features of heritage. The concept of ecomuseum brings some enlightenment: through the establishment of management organization with autonomous awareness and power, and with aborigines as the main body, it is suggested to build a living protection platform for architectural heritage, and organically integrate the natural environment and the human environment where the building is located, the users, defenders, traditional architectural technology, production and lifestyle. It is necessary to make some explorations on corresponding heritage, management, education and development platforms

according own conditions and development needs, so as to make the protection of local architectural heritage progress towards sustainable and healthy direction. From static state to living state, this seems to be a choice of way of existence, but in essence, it touches on all aspects of heritage protection, from connotation to extension, from concept to method, from macro to micro, all of which reflect the superiority of this concept. It is the priority choice for the protection of local architectural heritage.

REFERENCES

- [1] Georges Henry Riviere. Ecomuseum: A Definition of Evolution. *China Museum*, 1995 (3): 6.
- [2] Hu Chaoxiang. The Practice and Exploration of Guizhou Ecomuseum — For the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of Guizhou Ecomuseum. *China Museum*, 2005 (3): 3-8. (in Chinese)
- [3] Shan Jixiang. Study on Concepts and Methods of Local Architectural Heritage Protection (Part II). *Urban Planning*, 2009 (1): 57-79. (in Chinese)
- [4] Pan Shouyong. Theoretical Thinking on the Construction of the Third-Generation Ecomuseum and the Anji Ecomuseum Cluster. *Southeast Culture*, 2013 (6): 86-93. (in Chinese)
- [5] International Council of Monuments and Sites. Xi'an Declaration on the Protection of the Environment around Ancient Buildings and Sites and Historical Areas (2005). *Selection of International Charter and Domestic Regulations for the Protection of Urban Cultural Heritage*. Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2007:150-152. (in Chinese)
- [6] Su Donghai, Road for China's Ecomuseum. *China Museum*, 2005 (3): 15. (in Chinese)
- [7] Huang Chunyu. Thoughts on the Survival and Development of China's Ecomuseum. *China Museum*, 2001 (3): 2-9. (in Chinese)